

River's Edge Policy Institute

A Forum of Lindenwood University

Volume 2

Winter 2000

LU leads the way in teacher accountability

Warranty allows for free coursework if needed

Lindenwood University has initiated a revolutionary support service program for beginning teacher graduates. Believed to be the only such program in Missouri and one of a handful in the nation, the program commits the university to helping teachers succeed through the first year on the job.

The idea of a "New Teacher Warranty" has recently been touted by the 735-member American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley voiced support for the concept in his annual State of American Education speech last year.

The Lindenwood Support Service Program is as follows:

Lindenwood University supports efforts to establish and maintain high quality teacher preparation programs in Missouri. Clear, objective, measurable standards related to knowledge of the subject taught and teaching success in the "real world" classroom setting are the essential quality components of teacher preparation program assessment. In order to encourage the competency of beginning teachers, Lindenwood University will provide the following support services to graduates of the Teacher Preparation Program who meet all institutional requirements and have earned at least 60 hours of the coursework from Lindenwood.

Knowledge of the subject taught: Teachers in Missouri must pass a nationally recognized test (PRAXIS II) in the subject area to be taught at a level

established by the State Board of Education before a teaching certificate is issued. Lindenwood University requires that the mandated test be passed prior to placement in the student teaching setting. This ensures that the teacher possesses mastery of the subject matter to be taught. Lindenwood University will

provide up to 18 credit hours of appropriate refresher coursework to any qualified Lindenwood University graduate who does not pass the first administration of the PRAXIS II upon the request of, and at no tuition cost to, the student.

Effectiveness of Teaching

Skills: No one can judge the effectiveness of a beginning teacher more accurately than the administrator who hires and supervises the teacher.

Lindenwood University annually conducts a survey of employers to

determine the effectiveness of each Missouri beginning teacher graduating from our university. The survey is based on the 10 standards approved by the State Board of Education for beginning teachers. Lindenwood University will provide up to one semester of appropriate coursework to any qualified Lindenwood University graduate not considered at least satisfactory by the employing school district during their first year of teaching, upon the request of, and at no tuition cost to, the student.

Lindenwood University is committed to becoming the premier teacher preparation program in Missouri by providing the highest qualified teacher candidates for the school districts of this state.

No one can judge the effectiveness of a beginning teacher more accurately than the administrator who hires and supervises the teacher.

Teacher preparation is our highest priority

By DENNIS SPELLMANN

Last year, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Richard Riley called on the nation's colleges to place the highest priority on the preparation of teachers.

"In the next 10 years, 2.2 million teachers will have to be hired to meet swelling enrollments and teacher requirements," Secretary Riley said. "Given that educators are responsible for preparing the workforce of tomorrow, teacher preparation programs should be the cornerstone of academic institutions."

We at Lindenwood University agree. During the past decade, we have made the preparation of beginning teachers and the professional development of practicing teachers a primary area of emphasis. In that period, we have seen our teacher education enrollment grow from less than 100 to almost 5,000. We are so confident in the quality of our graduates that we provide additional coursework at no cost to the student, if needed to be successful.

During the past 10 years, public elementary and secondary education has become one of the most regulated of any state service. There has been a steady shift in decision-making authority away from local school boards and educators toward heavy-handed mandates by the education bureaucracy. Now the regulatory frenzy has also encompassed the state's teacher preparatory programs. We have been outspokenly critical of the usurpation of decision-making authority from local school officials. There is certainly no indication that the dictates from Jefferson City or Washington, D.C., have improved the effectiveness of educational programs within our state.

It is time that we focused on the basic principles that determine an effective teacher. We all want teachers who are humane, who know the subject they teach and who can lead students to high levels of achievement. We are very interested in the recent research of William Sanders. Sanders, a Tennessee agriculture professor, has done some fascinating follow-up of new teachers. Using a rather complex process, he has tracked the achievement of elementary school students over time with different teachers. He has been able to identify high-achievement and low-achievement teachers over a three-year period. He has found that youngsters consistently placed with high-achievement teachers do much better than expected, with the opposite true of low-achievement teachers. Perhaps it will soon be possible to fairly relate student achievement to teacher effectiveness. We hope so.

Each year, we meet with key state legislators to



discuss significant issues related to education in Missouri. Among the hot topics this year are the following:

- Reducing the Missouri education bureaucracy, allowing greater amounts of education tax dollars to flow directly to the public school districts of the state.

- Full funding of the Missouri Student Grant Program, to allow more able high school graduates to benefit from higher education opportunities.
- Review of regulations related to teacher preparation and certification, in order to address the upcoming crisis of teacher and administrator shortage in Missouri.
- Modification of the Missouri Public School Foundation Formula to make it more understandable, predictable and relevant to the numbers of students served by the school district.
- Increased flexibility for public school districts to "opt out" of MISIP requirements when the district demonstrates superior or steadily improving student achievement.

Over the next few weeks, we will host sessions to help formulate legislative proposals. I would welcome your thoughts on these topics, as well as any others you think important.

We at Lindenwood University value good teaching. We hope to practice it in our own classrooms, and we intend to prepare our beginning teacher graduates to be outstanding teachers in your classrooms. We value diversity in teacher preparation programs, because we think school district employers should have a choice in the background and preparation of your teaching candidates. This diversity should not be snuffed out by bureaucracy committed to standardization of all education programs.

Lindenwood University is successful, in large part, because our teacher education graduates are successful on the job. Let us know if we can be of assistance to you.

Dennis Spellmann is president of Lindenwood University in St. Charles, MO.

Education Division Update

Scholarships Available to Future Educators

Lindenwood University President Dennis Spellmann has authorized a \$1,000,000 scholarship program aimed at attracting prospective educators to pursue a career in teaching. The program also provides scholarship benefits to the Children of educators and school board members. Scholarships are based on merit, and will range from \$6,000 to \$12,600 annually, renewable for four years. Scholarship information is available from the Admissions Office at (636) 949-4949.

Lindenwood Offers New Certification Programs

In response to critical shortages in teaching fields, Lindenwood University recently initiated certification programs for school librarians and marketing education instructors. Plans are under way now to propose additional certification programs in school superintendency, industrial technology, and earth science. Requests to address the shortages in these areas of certification have come from numerous school districts in our service region, and have been recommended by our Education Division Advisory Committee, comprised of teachers and administrators from throughout our service region.

Lindenwood Graduates Serve as School Administrators

More than 135 graduates of the Lindenwood University Administrator Preparation Program are now currently employed as administrators throughout the state of Missouri. Most serve as principals or assistant principals in school districts throughout St. Louis, St. Charles, and neighboring counties. Lindenwood has become a primary provider of entry level administrators to the state of Missouri.

Lindenwood Explores Specialist Degree

Education Division faculty members have developed a proposal to initiate a Specialist in Education degree in the near future. A Focused Visit Team from the North Central Association Accrediting Commission visited the campus to review the proposed program in November, and will recommend to the NCA Commission on Accreditation approval of the program to the NCA Commission on Accreditation.

"This is but a first step of several in the long process to implement this new program," said Dr. Larry Doyle, Graduate Dean. "Following NCA approval we will initiate discussions with the Coordinating Board of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to include an Advanced Principal/Superintendent certification component with the degree."

Lindenwood Expands Education Division Faculty

Two new faculty members have joined the Lindenwood Education Division faculty. Dr. Richard Place, formerly assistant superintendent for business affairs in the Wentzville School District, now teaches Secondary Education and Educational Administration coursework. Dr. Larry Matthews, formerly mathematics coordinator for the Parkway School District, now teaches Research Methods in the Graduate Education program. Place and Matthews join 12 full-time faculty members and 48 adjunct faculty members now assigned to the Education Division.

Lindenwood Places Graduates Throughout Region

During the past six-year period, a total of 552 Lindenwood University graduates were employed in school districts throughout the state of Missouri. A total of 312 were employed in the six-county region surrounding the St. Charles campus. Among the largest employer of graduates were the Fort Zumwalt School District (51 graduates), the Francis Howell School District (43 graduates), and the Hazelwood School District (31 graduates). As of this fall, a total of 877 graduates of the Lindenwood University Teacher Preparation Program were teaching in 97 school districts throughout Missouri.

Trading Places Program Implemented

Lindenwood's Education professors returned to the elementary and secondary school classrooms in 2000 in a program designed to ensure current knowledge of classroom practices. Twelve Lindenwood University professors switched places for one day with elementary and secondary teachers. The program was initiated in both public schools and private schools in the metropolitan area.

The program is intended to accomplish two things, according to Dr. Rick Boyle, Education Division dean. "This transfer of duties helps our professors have continuing contact with elementary and high school youngsters. All too often, professors lose that personal involvement with young people when they enter the college classroom."

The program is also designed to help elementary and secondary teachers better understand the preparation of future teachers, and bring to the college classroom current experiences related to elementary and secondary teaching.

According to Dr. Larry Doyle, Educators' Center director, this is an important step in ensuring that professors maintain their relevance to teaching. Some institutions stress research over teaching, so some education professors have limited teaching experience, and many haven't been in a classroom for years. "Unless you return to the K-12 school setting frequently, you have little knowledge of what the beginning teacher will experience on-the-job," said Doyle. "We hire practitioners as professors, and we try to make sure they have extensive and continuing experience in the classroom settings their students will inherit."

Lindenwood Adds Program Sites

Lindenwood University opened four additional locations where the Master of Arts in Education program is offered to practicing teachers. New sites include Independence, Waynesville, Bourbon, and the City of St. Louis School District. These extended sites allow area teachers to complete the Master of Arts in Education program at a place and time convenient for their work schedules. Additional information on the 19 site locations can be secured from John Feely, Director of Program Development at (636) 916-1904.

Lindenwood Surveys Employers of Graduates

Each year, Lindenwood University conducts a survey of the employers of beginning teacher graduates. The survey is based on the 10 standards established by DESE for beginning teachers. Over the past two-year period, 85 percent of Lindenwood graduates were rated either excellent or above average by their principal.

"We place a high value on the judgment of those who hire our graduates," said Dr. Rick Boyle, Education Division dean. "We believe that the teacher's principal is in the best position to judge the quality of the beginning teacher, and we take their opinions very seriously."

Co-op Credit Programs Serve Missouri Teachers

This past year, almost 2,500 teachers throughout Missouri earned graduate credit through the Cooperative Credit Program sponsored by Lindenwood University. Working in conjunction with school districts and other educational agencies, Lindenwood partners with professional development providers to assist teachers in their own professional growth. Districts and their educational agencies wishing to explore a cooperative credit partnership with the University should contact Dr. Larry Doyle, dean of Graduate Studies at (636) 916-1905.

Character Education Program Grows

Dr. Emily Johnson of the Lindenwood faculty has initiated character education coursework for Lindenwood graduate and undergraduate students. Coursework provides teachers with the opportunity to create lesson plans consistent with the development of character in young people. The focus on character will be further expanded with the growth of The Center for Study of American Culture and Values and Boonsfield Village.

Educational policy issues facing Missouri legislators

The next Missouri General Assembly will have a unique opportunity to address some key educational issues before the citizens of our state. We believe our representatives in the General Assembly should pursue the following goals:

1. Our representatives should try to reduce the gradual shift of authority away from local control to the state bureaucracy. While this trend has been evolving for 40 years, it has accelerated rapidly in the last decade, transferring many of the decisions best made at the local level into the hands of the state education offices. This has taken decision-making away from Missouri citizens and placed it with appointed state boards and career officials who have no direct accountability to the public. The General Assembly should use legislative authority to begin the shift of responsibility for education back to locally elected public school boards, administrators and teachers, and to the boards of directors of the colleges and universities of our state.

2. Our representatives in the General Assembly should conduct a review to identify precisely what Missouri statutes require of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Having identified the specific statutory responsibilities of these agencies, the General Assembly should reduce the involvement of these agencies in matters not specifically mandated by statute. By eliminating the multitude of tasks not expressly required by law, each agency can focus on its' core responsibilities. It can do a better job with essential functions if it is free from the non-essential tasks.

Having redefined the mission of each agency, the General Assembly should address staffing levels with the goal of reducing the bureaucracy. Savings gained by this reduction in salary costs, office space, travel expenses, and other overhead should be divided into two parts. The first half would be returned to the ultimate users of education programs; to public school districts on a per-pupil basis, and to Missouri college students through scholarship/grant programs. The other half should be used to enhance agency performance by rewarding remaining excellent staff members with salary increases comparable to similar responsibility levels in the public schools.

3. Our representatives in the General Assembly should limit the automatic appropriation increases that institutions of higher education receive without regard to the numbers of students served. While a cost-of-living inflationary increase for public colleges might be appropriate, any increase above the CPI should be based on the number of students served by that institution. The General Assembly should use the revenue saved to create a grant program that would benefit all Missouri high school graduates. Such a program would make available up to \$3,000 for each high school graduate to be used at any approved Missouri higher education institution. Higher education institutions would only receive the funds in direct proportion to the number of students served. Our institutions would be more competitive if revenues were dependent upon success in effectively serving students.

4. Our representatives in the General Assembly should restructure the accreditation and assessment philosophy of

public schools to recognize not only achievement, but improvement as well. The Missouri School Improvement Plan should be aimed at helping schools improve. It serves little purpose to publicly embarrass school districts when the goal should be to help all districts continuously increase student achievement levels. Negative publicity has undermined public support of school districts, and has given critics fresh ammunition in their efforts to call into question the competency of our public school system. The new Commissioner of Education should use the influence of the office to build public support for local school districts. Respect of the state education bureaucracy by public school boards, administrators, and teachers has reached an all-time low. The new Commissioner must rebuild public and educator confidence in the Department, and expand the flexibility available to public school districts to address local needs.

5. Our representatives in the General Assembly should confront the issue of fairness in state funding for the public schools. With over 60 hold-harmless districts, the present foundation formula is simply not working. Greater equality in state assistance should be provided on a per-pupil basis, with some special consideration for high need areas. Missouri has created a school foundation formula that is complex, unpredictable, and increasingly unfair. It must become a legislative priority in the near future.

6. Our representatives in the General Assembly should begin to question the influence of high stakes testing on our educational institutions. The extreme pressure on schools to demonstrate higher passage rates on the MAP has become counterproductive. While measurable achievement by students is essential, the validity and reliability of current testing practices are clearly suspect. If the adult population of Missouri took the MAP, only a small percentage would likely be found proficient at the 10th grade level. We could experiment by having our elected officials take the exams. We need to ask the question: Does the MAP really test the essential skills it is intended to measure?

7. Our representatives in the General Assembly should revisit the statute and regulations related to teacher preparation program accountability. On the one hand, state policies have made it more difficult for prospective teachers to become certified through the traditional preparation route. At the same time, numerous exceptions are being made to allow individuals with no teacher preparation coursework to teach. The important thing is not how teachers were prepared, but how well they do the job they are hired to do. Teacher preparation programs should be judged by their customers; those employers that hire program graduates. The current state approval process (MoSTEP) should be modified to focus on outcomes by taking into account teacher performance during thier first year of teaching.

8. Our representatives in the General Assembly should ensure that no program mandates are issued to educational institutions without full funding support. Legislating "good ideas" that must be paid for by other governmental agencies is a cowardly act. If it is important enough to mandate, the

(Continued on page 4)

Educational policy issues facing Congress

Each term, the Congress of the United States deals with numerous issues related to the welfare of our citizens. The new Congress will consider a wide array of social programs intent on improving the quality of life of Americans. No doubt, many will involve education-related issues.

It has only been during the last generation that Congress has seen fit to legislate on education matters. Prior to the 1960s, members of Congress were content to accept at face value the 10th Amendment, which reserved to the states and to the people authority not expressly given to the federal government. Since education is not mentioned in the United States Constitution, state and local governments assumed responsibility for education policy and accountability.

Beginning with the Great Society of the 1960s, the federal bureaucracy decided it knew more about such things than state and local elected officials. Thus began a trend of federal involvement in education that continues to accelerate to the present. While many would prefer a substantial reduction in that level of involvement, it is naïve to expect that the Congress will withdraw from this arena. However, members of Congress should pursue the following goals.

1. Our members of Congress should attempt to establish a more appropriate balance between the federal and state role in education. Surely, duly elected officials at the state and local levels are in a better position to make program decisions about local schools than are federal bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. Our Congress has increasingly developed very prescriptive solutions to local problems. The result has been a cookie cutter approach to all forms of educational issues. These broad ax solutions have resulted in enormous waste of resources that could be salvaged if the Congress showed some trust in local decision-making.

2. Our members of Congress should ensure that no legislation is passed that mandates service without providing full funding from the federal government. To adopt well-intentioned legislation that passes on cost to other taxing authorities is an abuse of power. If it is to be required, the Congress should provide the resources to do it.

3. Our members of Congress should streamline educational funding mechanisms. As long as federal grants are made available for educational services, school districts will chase those dollars. To do so often requires additional personnel that perform no other service but to generate those funds. Districts of any size make a major time commitment to comply with the mandates of these federal programs. If the education bureaucracy were reduced and funding mechanisms streamlined, available dollars could be spent directly on the problem, rather than the administrative costs related to grant competition and regulatory management.

4. Our members of Congress should become knowledgeable about the purposes and limitations of standardized testing. The nation is caught up in a fanatical testing movement that causes major decisions to be made on the basis of a limited number of testing results. This is dangerous enough at the state level, but it creates enormous problems at the national level. Congress has fixation on quick solutions, based on rewards and punishment. Standardized

testing, while an essential component, is now given credibility far in excess of its reasonable limitations. Title II of the Higher Education Act (which attempts to rank the nation's teacher preparation programs on the basis of a standardized test) is simply unworkable and needs to be repealed. A much more rational way to evaluate teacher preparation programs would be to seek the judgement of the school principals who hire and supervise beginning teachers.

5. Our members of Congress should respect the diversity to be found in our university teacher preparation programs. There are forces at work that would standardize the preparation of teachers in a "one size fits all" model. But there is now a healthy diversity among the 1,300-plus teacher preparation programs in our nation. To force compliance with some mythical "national standard" in teacher preparation programs will weaken the preparation of teachers, and destroy the creativity that our nation's schools desperately need.

6. Our members of Congress should support efforts to help students pursue post-secondary education. In the 1940s, the GI Bill of Rights opened up higher education opportunities to returning military personnel. In the 1960s, the National Defense Education Act opened the doors of higher education to millions of young people who would have been unable to go to college without its assistance. Now, as much as ever, our nation's future depends upon young people who can continue their education. The Pell Grant Program, the student loan programs, and other funding mechanisms that help students (not institutions) fulfill their higher education goals continues to be the greatest service that Congress can provide in addressing educational policy.

With the beginning of the new century, Congress should seriously review its' responsibilities related to educational policymaking. The fear that the U.S. Department of Education is becoming the National School Board is gradually becoming a reality. Congress should focus its role in educational policymaking on helping states and local governments achieve educational quality with a minimum of bureaucratic interference, and supporting students in reaching higher levels of educational achievement.

Issues facing legislators (from page 3)

General Assembly should provide the funding source.

These eight actions would not address all the issues facing education in Missouri, but it would be a good first step. There will be critics to each of these proposals, because each negatively impacts some special interest group. But the majority of Missourians would be well-served by these approaches as we move into the 21st century. We encourage the General Assembly to thoughtfully address these issues.