



Making public schools great for every child

KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

In Kansas, school is in full-swing. Throughout the state, students are spending their days learning and their parents are getting back into the traditional routines of the school year. However, this year is anything but routine.

Labor Day weekend marked the unofficial end of summer as we celebrate the efforts of those before us who gave hard-working Americans the five day work week, sick and vacation leave, privacy rights, maternity leave, and much more. While parents are working hard for their families, educators will be helping their kids grown and learn.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled that Kansas public schools had not been equitably funded according to the constitution. Today, Governor Brownback is trying to take credit for the needed restorative funds the Supreme Court ruling mandated. While a few districts have benefited somewhat, the majority remain in financial crisis, dipping into contingency funds, cutting programs, and planning to cut deeper as the record state revenue shortfall is predicted to grow in coming months.

Kansas students continue to suffer while teachers and districts (particularly property poor districts) struggle to maintain basic needs. These realities are why teachers took to the statehouse by the hundreds in April. Governor Brownback could've been a visible leader. In fact, he wasn't even in the statehouse in April when the bill he now takes credit for was being pushed through by his allies in the dark of night, loaded with policy that had seen no discussion or public scrutiny. Teachers show up for Kansas students and their schools, even when the Governor does not.

State revenue projections continue to fall while the Governor promises MORE cuts to revenue sources. Some districts are preparing for extreme measures. Regardless, teachers will teach. They will teach larger groups of children with fewer resources and greater demands for results, but they will be the dedicated professionals they are. Teachers will make this the best year they can for their students. They will protect them, ensure their well-being and help them grow and learn, because that's what all educators do.

On November 4th, Kansans will have an opportunity to return to common sense policies or to continue with a failed experiment that every major analyst predicts will have far-reaching devastating effects on our state. Governor Brownback has promised to "hit the accelerator" and double-down on policy that benefits his wealthiest corporate backers, while it also cuts working Kansans to the bone.

Some may dismiss these thoughts as "union rhetoric", but I hope it will also make you question your assumptions. You see, I am a teacher, and inspiring students to question is what I do. Our association represents nearly 40,000 educators who work in Kansas classrooms every day. We don't apologize for our efforts to strengthen our profession because doing so strengthens the quality of education for Kansas kids and ensures a bright future for all Kansans. Regardless of the election outcome, teachers will be in classrooms to teach after Election Day and just like they do each and every day, Kansas teachers will work hard to make November 5th better than the day before.

President, Kansas NEA