

## Focusing on Education

July 29, 2009

(Las Vegas) Rarely, in Nevada, when talking about education, do we take time to applaud what's working. Today, the Las Vegas Sun, did just that by featuring the astounding accomplishments of Valley High School in their article, "A High School's Leap from So-so to Special." Recently, Valley was designated a "high-achieving turnaround" school under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. One of the school's most noticeable turnarounds is that an astonishing 80% of all juniors passed the state math proficiency exam this year, whereas five years ago more than half of all juniors failed to pass the test. This incredible turnaround could only have been achieved through hard work, ingenuity, and determination. Applause may be few and far between when it comes to this state's educational system, but today I applaud Valley High School for steering their school onto a path of excellence. With this achievement, they have raised the bar for all of us.

I believe we have a lot to learn from schools such as Valley High. We have a lot to learn and a long way to go. We can no longer ignore the facts:

Nevada's students are slipping behind their peers nationwide each year that they are in school. On the IOWA standardized tests, Nevada performs above national norms in 4th grade, BUT below national norms in 7th grade, and far below national norms in 10th grade in every category-Reading, Language, Math, and Science.

We do not properly invest in students' education. In 2008, Nevada invested \$7,133 per student, almost \$3,000 less than the national average of \$9,963. That's on costs excluding construction projects. Nevada Dept. of Education QuickSTATS February 2009, page 33.

Our children are not getting the attention they deserve. In Nevada we have 19.3 students per teacher, while the national average is 15.4 students per teacher. Nevada Dept. of Education QuickSTATS February 2009, page 31.

Our students are not getting the education they deserve. Our graduation rates are unacceptable. The Department of Education gives our graduation rate as 67.4%. Nevada Dept. of Educ. QuickSTATS February 2009. An independent study puts that number at 45%. Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, June 2008.

It is time we make an investment in our children's education - we need to invest time and ingenuity to ensure our children get the education they deserve. As a teacher, principal, and program administrator, I dedicated my life to making sure every child had an opportunity to succeed. As your State Senator, I have spent the past two legislative sessions fighting to keep our schools the best they can be. Nevada cannot continue to be a state of hope and opportunity, if our children do not get a good education.

Join me in this important conversation - I want to hear from you. Please take my online survey to share your ideas and concerns about our education system. [Click here](#), to go directly to my survey. If you want to contact me directly, please do not hesitate. [Click here](#) to send me an email on your thoughts, or call me at 702-307-9008.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

All my best,

Joyce

Senator Joyce Woodhouse,

Clark County, District 5

To read the Las Vegas Sun's full article on Valley High, [click here](#)