

Governor Dave Heineman
STATE OF NEBRASKA

June 9, 2009

Dear NSEA Leader:

I am writing to encourage you to work with your school district to make sure the \$234 million appropriated for additional state aid to education is spent where we know it matters the most — in the classroom.

It was a pleasure to work with NSEA President Jess Wolf this past legislative session to ensure that \$234 million in federal stimulus funds are used to provide additional state aid to our public schools. This 22 percent increase in state aid to schools is the largest increase in the state budget.

As I said at the NSEA Delegate Assembly in April, and at previous Delegate Assemblies, the State of Nebraska has provided school districts with the resources they need to increase teacher salaries to ensure they are competitive with surrounding states. We have significantly increased state aid during my Administration, yet teacher salaries at the local level are less than national and regional averages.

I support local control. I am skeptical of mandating how school districts spend their state aid, but I've grown increasingly concerned that the substantial increases in state aid have not been reflected in teacher pay. Superintendent salaries seem to be increasing at a significant rate while teacher salaries are not. That needs to change. It is absolutely essential to ensure that education budgets are focused on the classroom.

One of the key requirements of the federal stimulus funds for education is "making improvements in teacher effectiveness and ensuring that all schools have highly qualified teachers." In order to attract highly qualified teachers, school districts need to have salaries that are competitive. We must work to make sure that our resources are spent in the classroom to recruit and retain quality teachers.

Some school districts say that funding does not exist to provide teachers with competitive salaries. I disagree. During the past four years that I have been Governor, we have significantly increased state aid to education and we need school districts to provide teachers with competitive salaries.

Nebraska's future is dependent upon education and the economic vitality of our state. Thank you for your service to our state, your community and, most importantly, to our children. I look forward to working with you and the NSEA on these important education issues in the future.

Sincerely,



Dave Heineman

Governor