Kelso lauds focus on K-12 achievement

by Dana Schroeder

Focus on achievement
She said in a recent interview that the development of "a very real focus on student achievement" throughout the education system is the number one K-12 accomplishment during her years in office. As a school board member and during her early years in the Legislature, she said, "The focus of the entire system was on money management and on equity issues among school districts and among students."

"Now the discussion is focused on student achievement and how to get kids to pass the basic skills tests and meet the graduation rule," she said. The system is moving resources to meet students' needs, she said. "We don't deal with a problem until we identify it. Statewide testing provided a jolt this state needed."

"Now we'll know what districts, what schools and even what classrooms are succeeding," she said. "It's a fearsome thing to the system. There's been a huge change since the first wave of eighth-grade tests."

"Minnesota is among the best in the country for college-bound..." Continued on page 6

Proposed desegregation rule is flawed

by Gary L. Cunningham, Barbara Bearman and Matthew Little

In reviewing the proposed new draft of the state desegregation rule, we are disheartened that the Department of Children, Families and Learning could develop a document that turns its back on the mountain of research data and history that has led us to this critical moment. Public education, particularly in urban settings throughout the country, is on trial. Our public education systems in Minneapolis and Saint Paul are a mirror image of the crisis in urban education and its failure to produce a quality education for all students.

Both Minneapolis and Saint Paul do an adequate job in educating European American students; however, neither district, like many others across the country, receives high marks for educating students of color. This repeated pattern of failed education policy is, in part, due to a lack of firm and unequivocal support for the proposition that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" by the political leadership, both nationally and locally.

The history of desegregation in Minneapolis is a long and winding road, beginning with the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954. In Booker v. Special School District No. 1 (1972), the court found that educational segregation was a result of both racial segregation and specific school board policies, including locations of schools, attendance zones, enrollment and teacher assignments. The Minneapolis Public School District was not exempt from specific court orders to desegregate its students and faculty as a remedy to address... Continued on page 5

Teachers need better preparation

by Deb Hare and Joe Nathan

Many new teachers know their subject matter well, but don't know how to teach it. That's just one important observation made by the over 1,100 public school administrators and parent/community advocates who responded to a recent survey on Minnesota teacher preparation. The survey and a report summarizing the results were completed by the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute in response to questions asked by the 1998 Minnesota Legislature about the quality of teacher preparation.

This is an especially important issue, because thousands of Minnesota teachers will be retiring in the next decade. Minnesota teacher preparation programs play a key role in the quality of Minnesota's education system, since those programs train the vast majority of new Minnesota teachers. Most principals reported that 70 percent or more of their recent hires graduated from Minnesota preparation programs. Every Minnesota public school principal and superintendent, along with selected parent/com... Continued on page 4
A 21st century agenda for better state-local relations

Minnesota has undertaken many efforts in the past decade to look at the way our state and region is governed. In December, groups ranging from statewide organizations of community and city governments met to explore the issue of unfunded mandates. The practice of one level of government requiring another level to pay for services is putting a strain on the fiscal health of local governments. This discussion spotlighted some of the challenges posed by the different levels of government. In our region, we have among the highest numbers of government units per capita in the developed world. By the same token, things tend to work fairly well and there is no cry for major consolidation. Even efforts in the 1990s to force the practice of one level of government to pay for services was thwarted by the political resistance to the idea.

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Viewpoint

by Lyle Wray

A 21st century agenda for better state-local relations

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New Research indicates that involve-
A l little over ten years later (1983), the court ended its jurisdiction over the Minneapolis Public Schools. In that time period, according to Gregor Pinney of the Minneapolis Tribune (Aug. 1983), "no school district in the country refers to these areas as "minority schools" in the center and "white schools" in the suburbs. Minority and white students been spread around to such an extent that it is difficult to put those labels on any school anymore."

While the proposed desegregation rule recognizes that there is a bene-

A question not addressed in the proposed rule is whether integra-

High poverty schools in Min-

The proposed desegregation rule provides no consequences for the sta-

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"The proposed desegregation rule provides no consequences for the status quo.

students, then it is time we stop making excuses for our failures and start being held accountable for results. The proposed desegreg-

Policymakers cannot continue to 

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### Kelso

#### Continued from page 6

**Sue Urban League President**

H. J. Sudduth, said, "Show me the money."

"Selling the money to the state was a good idea."

"Where I think we made a mistake was the way in which the state eventually chose to fund the aid to go to the schools," she said, rather than just the new compensatory funding. In 1998 the Legislature put more money into compensatory funding to hold harmless the sites that were losing funds, Kelso said.

She believes poverty is not the best way to target compensatory funding and that the state will eventually move to target the funding on students rather than schools.

She cited Rep. Joe O'Fer's (DFL-St. Cloud) exploration of giving teachers more money in a controlled and mandated way, while giving sites doing well more control over the funding.

**Issues remaining:***

- noted four major education facing the state in the near future:
  - Getting kids to pass the basic skills tests
  - The profiles of learning
  - Class-size reductions
  - Racial integration/desegregation.

Kelso thinks setting state standards for what kids need to know makes good sense. But as the profiles of learning have developed, she said, "I'm not sure how we ended up in this situation. The profiles are so over-bureaucratic. But she believes the profiles can be used as a way to cut if the extra adult in a classroom makes up 12 percent of K-12 costs; in some districts it's even higher. Kelso said the new Commissioner of Education funding committee, she out-must be retained. And she find them by now. It goes back to the idea of tenure is the expansion of public school choice. She played an important part in the 1991 passage of Minnesota's charter school law—the first such law in the country—as the chief House counsel.

She does not see choice as a systemic rule to be effective, we must move beyond parochial self-interest and move forward on public school choice. She has been on the administrative law judge on the Hennepin County administrative law. More information about the hearing is available by calling Mary Cunningham, Director of Children, Families and Learning at 651-297-8720 or 1-800-657-3927.

### Take Note

**Continued from page 8**

**The winter 1999 edition of the Minnesota Department of Education's sanctions report.**

According to the report, a total of 5,654 students were in the district's 20 percent-plus-plus job growth rate led the way. Moreover, with base employment only a fifth

### Desegregation

**Continued from page 5**

Responsibility all students learn. The goals of desegregation and school choice are not mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The proposed new desegregation rule is guaranteed to perpetuate mutually exclusive, but interdependent.
42% of Minneapolis 11th graders face testing hurdle

A different kind of Y2K problem: What happens when members of the Class of 2000 are ready to march up on stage to receive their high school diplomas and a sizable number of them have not yet passed the state-required basic skills tests in reading and math—despite, in some cases, five years of trying? Will the state stick to its guns with the state-required basic skills tests? The tests were first given to them as eighth graders (or later, if they came from out of state or otherwise missed the first round of testing). The students have been retested each year, meaning a continuously enrolled 11th grader has taken and failed one or both tests three times. The next round of testing takes place at the end of January.

In certain cases, special education students and limited English proficiency (LEP) students can be exempted from the testing requirement. Char Rogers of the Minneapolis Schools Research, Evaluation and Assessment Office said some students who had already been exempted before these statistics were compiled, but others will still likely qualify for exemption and others will drop out or move out of the district before next year. Nonetheless, a large number of Minneapolis 11th graders will have to improve their test scores this year or next, or qualify for an exemption, or the district—and others around the state—will face more than computer problems in Y2K.

—Dana Schroeder.

R.I.P., TIF. A recent study by two Illinois economists provides more ammunition for the Citizens League’s long-standing advocacy for either elimination or complete overhaul of tax-increment financing.

The study suggests that, in direct contrast to conventional wisdom, cities that adopt TIF actually grow more slowly than cities that don’t use TIF. Analyzing data on cities in Cook County, Illinois, and surrounding counties, the authors found that equalized assessed values in cities using TIF grew more slowly because TIF “redirects economic activity to TIF-designated areas at the expense of the rest of the city.”

Also implied in the study is an argument posited by the League’s Help Wanted report (Nov. 1998): namely, that TIF and other popular real estate-based economic development incentives do not provide the “value-added” necessary for economic growth in an information economy.—Ron Wirtz.

Allow us to puff out our chests a bit. The principal recommendation of a 1987 Citizens League report entitled The New Weigh to Recycle was that the Legislature should “require that fees for waste collection and disposal services be volume-sensitive.” The thinking was that volume-based garbage fees would reward people for reducing their garbage by buying less, paying attention to packaging, recycling or other means.

Apparently, policymakers in Minnesota have paid attention. According to Governing magazine, 3,887 communities across the country have solid-waste collection programs that charge based on the amount of trash generated. Of those, 1,834, or 47 percent, are here in Minnesota. And it’s probably no coincidence that Minnesota is one of the nation’s leading recyclers. Another example of the League shaping public policy that makes Minnesota a national leader.—Phil Jenni.

A year-long Metro Council study on sewer access charges (SAC) has produced recommendations mirroring those of the Citizens League’s 1997 It Takes A Region report. Both studies recommended that the SAC fee be increased so new development bears the full cost of sewer expansion.

The revenue shortfall produced by the current SAC rate is made up by existing ratepayers. The Council report recommended that the SAC fee be increased $50 per year until SAC revenue equals the cost of serving growth, which it estimated to be about double the current SAC fee of $1,050. Just 10 years ago, the SAC fee was $550.

At its December meeting, the full Council approved a set of SAC changes stemming from the report that will now go to the Legislature for authorization and possible implementation next year.—R.W.

Jeff Goldsmith, president of Charlottesville-based Health Futures, Inc., sees one of three “predictable crises in health care” as the damage to the foundation of conventional life and health insurance that will be wreaked by the explosion of knowledge about the genetic sources of disease, coupled with the medical advances sure to follow.

Goldsmith predicts individuals who know they are at high risk for genetically-influenced illness will shop accordingly for a health-insurance plan. Premiums for the plans chosen by sicker people go up, healthier members of those plans move to cheaper policies or decide to forego insurance and health insurers lose money, even after raising premiums.

New Medicare regulations forbid health insurers from discriminating on the basis of genetic information; it’s difficult to imagine the American public standing for it in the commercial market, either. That means a genetic “information asymmetry” would work to the advantage of individual consumers.

According to Goldsmith, insurers may decide to “cut their losses, voluntarily end the conventional underwriting process, and embrace community rating instead.” (Community rating means everyone in a community pays the same as everyone else in the same age and sex category, regardless of health status or history.) With community rating come higher premiums for younger, healthier people, some of whom may take their chances and go without.

Goldsmith’s proposal: Require all individuals to maintain health coverage (like auto insurance), cap the Medicare payroll tax rate for workers under 35 and provide a means-tested tax credit that people with limited incomes may use only to purchase coverage. Pay for the tax credit by limiting tax deductibility of employer-provided health insurance above a certain income level.

A correct prediction? The right solution? Too soon to know.—Janet Dudrow.

We’re not #1! According to analysis by the Minnesota Taxpayer Association, it looks as though state’s 1997 property tax reforms have actually made some inroads on the state’s unflattering reputation as a high-tax state.

For example, the state moved from second to third highest in apartment property taxes and from first to third in commercial property over $1,000,000. And recent reforms improved the rank of industrial property valued at $1,000,000 from first in the nation to seventh and taxes on $150,000 homes moved from 14th to 19th.—R.W.