

Schools should collaborate not compete

The Nebraska Department of Education released the results Wednesday of the Nebraska Performance Accountability System. This system ranks and sorts school districts in Nebraska according to state math, science, writing and reading test scores.

I applaud the Nebraska Department of Education for this effort at transparency. However, I am concerned that neither the results nor the accountability system itself will do much to improve education in Nebraska schools.

Moreover, scores on point-in-time tests do not provide parents or teachers with an adequate measure of student progress. State tests provide a narrow view of student achievement; they do not effectively represent the skill and

knowledge of students or their teachers.

Here is the reality: We have students throughout the state who face a variety of different challenges, none of which are described or accounted for through NePAS.

Many of our students are affected by poverty, language barriers, disabilities and health issues. These factors influence not only the ability to learn but also the motivation to learn.

Multiple measures of student success are needed to sufficiently reflect educational growth given these and other influences. Schools are already responding to these challenges.

Nebraska students and their teachers deserve a more sophisticated measure of student progress and teacher account-



Cindy
Copich

ability than a standardized test. This approach is contrary to our basic understanding of how students demonstrate true learning.

Imagine if Nebraska students were issued a driver's license solely on their mastery of a written multiple choice test. Most of us recognize the importance of performance evaluations, whether it pertains to a driver's test or job performance. Why would our students and teachers deserve anything less?

I ask you to contact the governor, your state representative and State Board of Education members and request that they review and revise the state accountability system.

Encourage our elected officials to allow educators from within the state to come up with a more adequate and appropri-

ate measure of student learning and accountability reporting.

Sorting and ranking school districts forces them to compete against one another. Nebraska schools will improve much faster

when teachers and administrators from the various districts come together to share

ideas and work collaboratively to better meet the needs of all students.

Cindy Copich is an incoming member of the Bellevue Board of Education, although these views are solely her own. She has three children in Bellevue Public Schools, and she is working toward her doctorate in educational administration and supervision after more than 10 years as a classroom teacher in Nebraska and seven years as the director of a nonprofit organization.

GUEST VOICE