March 2014

Dear [Senator, House Representative]

I am writing to ask you to vote in favor of repealing the Minnesota Teacher Licensing Exam (MTLE) “Basic Skills Test” per the recommendations of the legislature-appointed Teacher Licensure Advisory Task Force.

[Personal story or example here: “Our immersion school is a National Blue Ribbon School built on a strong foundation of native speakers of [Spanish, Chinese, French, etc.] as well as English. Some of these [Spanish, Chinese, French, etc.] speakers are struggling to pass all of the MTLE exams and we are in danger of losing them!”… or “My favorite teacher may lose their job due to…” etc.]

It appears the MTLE skills test has become the sole criteria for assessing teaching ability and also has been used as a “pre-screening tool.” This *removes the ability of our Principal to make hiring decisions that are best for our school*. *The test has demonstrated bias against people of color and those whose first language is not English*—this at a time when we are trying to narrow the achievement gap; experts suggest more teachers of color, skilled in students’ home languages, to achieve that goal. For immersion schools, a mix of teachers with native English as well as native target language skills is vital.

Think of your favorite teacher from childhood—or your children’s favorite teacher today. Under the MTLE law they would not able to teach third grade literature if they were weak in college level Algebra. The pedagogy tests that demonstrate teachers’ ability to teach are still in place in Minnesota—it is the misnamed “Basic Skills Test” that needs to go.

It’s not about lowering standards—*it’s about attracting and retaining the best teachers in their area of specialty for which they are qualified*—things Minnesota has always measured well.

Sincerely,

XXXXXX

Address