

# Rep. Vruwink: Evolutions in education

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I'm retired from teaching after 42 years, except for the occasional substitute teaching job, which keeps me in touch with what is happening in classrooms today.

As a member of the Assembly Education Committee, I hear testimony from educators from around the state on how legislation we pass affects their schools. I often think to myself: If only some of my colleagues spent some time in the classroom, they would see how education has changed since they were in school.

They would better understand the struggles that administrators, teachers, and students face with small budgets, lack of space, lack of high-speed internet in rural areas, old textbooks, and old equipment.

Leaders in education know we need to prepare students to be lifelong learners - students who can be adaptive, innovative, and respond to a changing workforce.

Schools can't do it alone. We need our communities, business leaders, civic groups, and lawmakers to move the focus away from standards and testing and toward a culture of learning that emphasizes lifelong skills.

I went to Washington D.C. recently to ask our Congressional delegates for two things: 1) increased funding to replace and upgrade classroom technology and 2) increased Title IV funds for teacher training and professional development. Because of state-imposed restraints on local school funding, we need to work aggressively to obtain federal funds.

In the last 15 years, we have seen an explosion of charter schools, alternative

schools, advanced placement classes, dual enrollment, robotics, fabrication labs, and an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math skills (STEM).

For the first time this school year, every Wisconsin student in grades six to 12 must have an academic and career plan to guide their course of study. These plans are developed in consultation with parents and school counselors, and follow the student if they move to another school district.

I recently served on a three-member team that heard presentations from 16 high school seniors about their academic and career plans. While our schools face tremendous challenges in helping our students achieve academic and career success, from what I heard during those eight hours of presentations, our future is in good hands.

*Rep. Don Vruwink represents the 43<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District, which includes parts of Rock, Walworth, Jefferson and Dane counties. He can be reached at [Rep.Vruwink@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Rep.Vruwink@legis.wi.gov) and at 608-266-3790. The mailing address is P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708.*