

# Deseret News

## John Florez: So which kids are worth saving?

By John Florez , Deseret News

Published: Saturday, July 27 2013 12:00 a.m. MDT



Senator, Aaron Osmond discusses SB71 at a press conference Monday, March 4, 2013 at the Utah State Capitol. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

I thought Utah was a strong family state. So why is state Sen. Aaron Osmond wanting to punish kids for their parents' problems? He wants to end compulsory education so schools will have to teach only those kids whose parents are engaged in their child's education, and write off the problem families.

So what does the senator propose to do with those children whose parents are not able to make sure their child comes to school ready to learn? Kick them out of school? Senator, it's pay now or pay later; we do a lot of that already with our jails, courts, teen pregnancy, unemployment, welfare, broken families and national security. Rather than helping parents become better parents, he would let their kids fail, let schools pick the low hanging fruit to educate and forget the rest. What kind of family policy is that?

We now have more broken and single-parent families struggling to make ends meet, many holding two to three jobs, making it difficult to help their children

with their education. They often don't have food, clothes and are one illness away from being homeless. It's a testament to the resiliency of the children who, under those circumstances, are able to make it to school. Senator, our families need your support — not your neglect.

Our nation's values, faith, families and belief that education is vital in having a free society is embedded in our Founders' beliefs as best inscribed in the Jefferson Memorial, "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Establish a law for educating the common people. This it is the business of the state and on a general plan." Our Founders always thought the best protection against the evils of tyranny and oppression was to end ignorance and educate our people. Unfortunately, we are now seeing the results of our growing ignorance with the disconnect between the policies promulgated by our politicians and the values we espouse.

Utah has always placed great value on families and children and created policies and institutions to carry them out; and acknowledged it was the responsibility of parents to care for their children, as with compulsory education and child protection and support laws. That the culture of education has become contentious rather than an opportunity is due to lawmakers who impose compulsory regulations on educators that douse their passion to challenge students. Lawmakers, as leaders, must lead by example and create a culture of risking and rewarding, rather than intimidation.

Schools and family services are now at the convenience of the system rather than powerless parents that have no lobby to look after their interest. Our schools are outdated with burdensome policies, and with legislators blaming parents for their failure in meeting the changing needs of our society. Parents have always had a choice in the education of their children, but without the resources, what's the choice? Osmond seems to believe the children of "engaged parents" are not getting the education they need because teachers spend more time with children of irresponsible parents. The reality is our schools are mediocre because politicians have listened to the "stakeholders" and lack the courage to see that schools prepare all children to be successful citizens. Don't blame the customer for our mediocre schools.

Osmond and his colleagues should create a culture that unites rather than divides all parents around a common purpose — saving all our kids, the future of our society.

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