



Thank you Lieutenant Governor Mae Schunk.

I'd like to welcome all of our distinguished guests --- and fellow Governors -- to Minnesota. What the Lieutenant governor says is true -- I *do* care about public education -- and I knew that all Minnesotans cared about education.

Minnesota has long been a leader in education -- for example -- charter schools began here. But we can't be satisfied with the past, because as the world changes, education must change also.

That's why I chose a life-long teacher for my running mate.

I have named her as my Ambassador of Education, and she has pledged to visit every school district in the state.

For me, I very much enjoy learning. But most of all, I enjoy action.

So when I learned from the Lieutenant Governor and others what we needed to improve education, I took action.

The first thing she told me about was class size reduction -- so in my first legislative session that became a priority.

We doubled the amount of money devoted to reducing class sizes in grades K-through-3, totaling 173-million-dollars.

I learned that school districts had been under-funded for the last 10 years -- so we added more than 800-million to the K-12 budget, the biggest increase ever in Minnesota.

We eliminated the word "vouchers" from our vocabulary.

Public dollars belong to public schools.

We've fought to uphold a controversial set of high standards that redefines what it means to be educated.

We insisted that students need to pass high stakes standards in order to prove they have learned something.

Let me bow toward Wisconsin a moment and quote Green Bay football coach Vince Lombardi: "If you don't keep score, you're only practicing."

We increased funds for special education by more than 100-million dollars -- and that's not enough.

Special education is a prime example of an unfunded mandate (or at least an under-funded mandate).

The Federal Government requires the states to implement special education programs -- but they have not lived up to their pledge to fund 40-percent of the costs.

It's closer to 10 percent.

Vice President Al Gore has told me he plans to have the Federal Government live up to his pledge.

And I hear Governor Bush has a similar plan.

If they live up to it, Minnesota stands to get an extra 300-million dollars.

I encourage all the states to press every presidential candidate on this point, and encourage the federal government to live up its 40-percent promise for special education funding.

We need this money to help continue Minnesota's tradition as a leader in education.

I know other states will benefit likewise. That's okay -- I don't mind the competition --

Because in our global economy, our students are really competing against those in Singapore, Sweden, Denmark and Japan.



I welcome this gathering in Minnesota to see what we can all do to make sure each state has high performance education. Thank you.