

Introductory remarks by Governor Ventura  
(Actual comments may vary from written text)

Good morning. I'm very glad to be here today.

The presence of Lt. Governor Schunk by my side should remind everyone that I value public education so much I chose a teacher for my running mate.

I am also glad to have at my side my education Commissioner, Christine Jax.

Today I want to talk about the concerns and I have about education funding and the ideas I have for reform.

We added a tremendous amount of new money to education two years ago, and now I want to see what we got for it.

That's called "Accountability."

The single biggest concern I have is salary negotiations with teachers. It is disturbing when school districts end up with contracts that provide more money than they have in their budgets.

Common sense says you don't count your chickens until they've hatched.

That's why I support legislation by Senator Scheevel and Representative Mark Buesgens that would require the budgets of school districts to be structurally balanced.

Another concern I have is being misrepresented.

I *never* said, "Teachers are lining their pockets." That statement was a figment of some copy editor's imagination.

Besides, Mae Schunk would give me a sharp elbow in the ribs if I ever said anything like that.

What I actually said in that speech was that "Teachers are generally under-paid and under-appreciated."

Another concern: I AM NOT CUTTING EDUCATION FUNDING! I AM PROPOSING AN INCREASE!

My budget for 2002-03 will increase education spending by nearly a half billion dollars.

And finally, this debate should not be only about money. Too often the debate centers on little kids who are manipulated by interest groups to play the victims in a budget debate.

Yes this debate is about money, but it is also about reform.  
Reforming the way we pay teachers by promoting alternative pay structures to reward excellent teachers and allow schools to compete with the private sector for good teachers.

Reforming our accountability standards by developing a continuous improvement plan to determine how well schools are working and to make sure that academic and financial information is more accessible to parents and taxpayers.

And reforming the way we license teachers by promoting new ways to get licenses for qualified people who would make excellent fully licensed teachers.

But my biggest funding idea for public schools is my proposal to reform property taxes so that the state pays 100% of basic district revenue.

I have not heard a better solution to this problem than to remove property wealth from the equation.

I hope as today's discussion continues that we'll find more things to agree on and that we at least get a clear unfiltered view of each other's perspectives.