

Barbara Varner
Parent of a Student with Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS)
Sturgeon Missouri

May 5, 2011

State Board of Education
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear State Education Leaders:

I am writing to express my support for an important effort being undertaken by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education—the Top 10 by 20 initiatives. I also believe revising the Missouri School Improvement Program standards to be more rigorous is a key piece to this effort. Making Missouri's public education system one of the Top 10 in the country is crucial to the future of our state.

I applaud the work that the Department, the State Board of Education and educators across Missouri have done over the past two decades to steadily improve education in our state. As we look ahead, we know we must redouble our efforts to make sure that our graduates can compete nationally and internationally.

A well-trained, highly qualified workforce is crucial to making Missouri a destination for the high-paying, high-skill jobs of the future. This is especially true in regards to having **qualified Speech Language Pathologists (SLP's)** in all the schools in Missouri. It is well documented that speech and reading go together; if a student has problems with his speech then he is likely to have problems learning to read also. Being a good reader is crucial to reaching the top 10. The speech implementer program that Missouri allows is a poor substitute to having well trained, highly qualified Speech Language Pathologist. We need to provide the proper funding so that all school districts can hire and retain qualified SLP's. Reaching the Top 10 will lead to the prosperity and success that Missouri expects.

Sincerely,



Barbara Varner
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Academic Support Center
University of Missouri