

There are so many distractions to solid consistent efforts. USA VALUES, LLC thinks schools would be really different if 100% of the kids were ready to read count and understand positive direction starting in kindergarten. School districts should contract with providers to properly define the customer and the guarantee of high quality. Everything sorts itself out at a lower cost than what is spent now with this restructure of a very critical industry.

Published: October 26, 2010 3:00 a.m.

Tracy Warner, editorial page editor, has worked at The Journal Gazette since 1981. He can be reached at 461-8113 or by e-mail, [twarner@jg.net](mailto:twarner@jg.net).

### **Consistency best course in education**

How many people remember Gov. Robert Orr's A-Plus education plan from 1987?

Later came Project Primetime. How many parents remember that?

ISTEP begat IPASS, which begat ISTEP+.

News that the governor and state superintendent of public instruction and key legislators plan to "reform" education next year should come as no surprise.

It seems that every few years, lawmakers and other state officials are "reforming" education.

The big issues the "reformers" want to pursue next year?

- **More charter schools** – largely a matter of how much money privately run schools are going to drain

from established public schools.

- **More accountability for teachers**, changing the way they are evaluated and paid.

- **Making sure "money follows the student"** – a way to shift money to suburban schools and away from

urban and rural schools.

Then we have other issues flying around, such as starting school after Labor Day or politicizing textbook selection or making it harder for parents to sue teachers.

Every year or two, it seems, lawmakers want to make a mark on education.

Too often, local school administrators have to deal with new rules and laws, some of them marking dramatic changes. Too often, school officials don't find out until weeks before school starts how much money they will have available, usually because lawmakers want to "reform" school financing.

Too often, school administrators are spending time adjusting to last-minute legislative mandates when that time that could be better used.

Why do elected officials think frequent, last-minute changes will help build better schools?

Perhaps the best way to build better schools is to stop annual "reforms" and consistently emphasize the issues that matter.

Lower class sizes, which require more efficient school financing. Ongoing teacher training. Better resources for students learning English as a second language. Sensible testing that complements

instruction rather than drives it.

Lawmakers desperately want to give parents more choices for their school-age children (that's less efficient, by the way) while ignoring preschool education, one of the single most important needs. Gov. Mitch Daniels calls for fewer school districts – while at the same time advocating for charter schools, each of which is, essentially, its own school district.

Many elected officials – including some candidates for school boards – remember the way things were when they went to school and want it to be just like that now. It can't. Society has changed and is changing.

Schools need to adjust resources to address changes. Instead, state officials too often use changes as excuses to accomplish political goals that have more to do with union-busting and supplementing private schools than strengthening public schools.

Education will be an important issue in next week's election. Candidates who promise numerous changes may not be recommending the best course.

Tracy Warner, editorial page editor, has worked at The Journal Gazette since 1981. He can be reached at 461-8113 or by e-mail, [twarner@jg.net](mailto:twarner@jg.net).