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Governor's Column: Teachers key to Kansas' future

The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

As governor, I've been proud to oversee an historic commitment to Kansas schools during the past couple of years. We're preparing our state for the future by giving Kansas kids access to good schools in every community.

But Kansas and the nation as a whole are facing a new challenge when it comes to educating our children: too many good teachers are leaving the profession.

Growing up, I gained a special appreciation for teachers and the work they do. Both of my parents and two of my grandparents were teachers, and I married into a family of teachers when I married Gary Sebelius. They, like most teachers, viewed teaching as a calling and they devoted their lives to educating children.

Today, many of our most dedicated teachers are nearing retirement age. For example, a quarter of Kansas teachers are eligible to retire in the next five years alone. Others are leaving teaching for a variety of reasons, including issues involving pay, working conditions, and a feeling of a lack of professional support.

Our nation will not be able to maintain its position as a global leader in business, science, technology and countless other fields without a well-educated workforce. And our children will not be ready to succeed in that workforce without quality teachers.

That's why I'm making teacher retention the focus of my term as leader of the Education Commission of the States, a national, non-political organization devoted to bringing state leaders, education experts, teachers and parents together to improve our schools.

"Great Teachers for Tomorrow" seeks to provide teachers with the working conditions and professional support they need to do their jobs well, which will provide an incentive for them to remain in the classroom.

We can maintain our state's prosperity and ensure a bright future for our children tomorrow if we make a commitment to keeping good teachers in the classroom today.

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