



# Auburn Community Unit District No. 10



Amy Donaldson, ES Principal  
Telephone 438-6916

Matt Grimm, MS Principal  
Telephone 438-6919

Mark Dudley, JH Principal  
Telephone 628-3414

606 North Street  
Auburn, Illinois 62615  
Darren Root, Superintendent  
Telephone 217-438-6164  
Fax 217-438-6483

Nathan Essex, HS Principal  
Telephone 438-6817

Dave Bates, Athletic Director  
Telephone 438-6549

October 11, 2017

HB 2977 symbolizes dysfunction and sparks a more desperate conversation than the teaching of cursive writing. Whether or not cursive handwriting is an important skill is a misplaced argument. Nobody disagrees that cursive writing is important. That's the problem. Every mandate, funded or unfunded, is important to somebody. This bill symbolizes an issue much deeper and it exemplifies a disconnect between our lawmakers and our schools.

The debate surrounding HB 2977 is about the erosion of local control given to our local school boards. It creates a growing distrust. It's about the overwhelming number of unfunded mandates that have been passed out during the worst financial crisis in the history of Illinois. It's about adding another requirement without the discussion of what unintended consequence it may have or what message it may be sending. Another law at the state level is not needed and many times it creates more problems than it solves.

***My school district teaches cursive writing by choice. So for the Auburn School District, the bill itself changes nothing. For years, schools have been based on local decision making. Our local school boards are elected to make these decisions.***

One could make the argument that cursive handwriting is no longer taught in some schools because technology has changed the way we communicate. Cursive is becoming more of an art than a required workplace skill. People today use spell-check features, download statistics, and do internet searches for information and resources. Much like the payphone, encyclopedias have become more of a decoration than a resource tool. Most would agree that mandating the practice of using a payphone or doing research by way of the encyclopedia in the name of posterity would be ridiculous.

Remember when the classical handwritten notes were passed during class? The teacher would occasionally intercept them. At the end of the day, the custodian would have a broom full of folded notes in a pile after sweeping the floor. The world has changed and those days are gone. Nobody passes notes anymore. They text, e-message, and use various social media tools. Students take notes with their computers and tablets. The world has changed.

On Sunday, April 30, 2017, the sponsor of HB 2977 explained why he introduced the bill. He was one of the guests interviewed on a local television program called Capitol Connection where legislators are

**Trojan Pride – Committed to Excellence**



# Auburn Community Unit District No. 10



Amy Donaldson, ES Principal  
Telephone 438-6916

Matt Grimm, MS Principal  
Telephone 438-6919

Mark Dudley, JH Principal  
Telephone 628-3414

606 North Street  
Auburn, Illinois 62615  
**Darren Root, Superintendent**  
**Telephone 217-438-6164**  
**Fax 217-438-6483**

Nathan Essex, HS Principal  
Telephone 438-6817

Dave Bates, Athletic Director  
Telephone 438-6549

interviewed under the rotunda in Springfield. He discovered one evening, while sitting at home having supper, the school district where his family lives no longer teaches cursive handwriting. He couldn't believe it, so he wrote HB 2977, requiring all districts to teach it.

How could this be? I was taught cursive handwriting when I was in school. My parents were taught cursive and their parents were too. We were all taught cursive handwriting and it wasn't a law then! Maybe it was because the system worked and there was more local authority to make these decisions. Was there a study done that shows a decline in legible cursive handwriting and has this resulted in students missing out on employment opportunities? Is HB 2977 data-driven or emotionally driven based on our classroom experience?

All mandates have some cost involved; either an increase in personnel expenses or additional curriculum material. There is no additional funding tied to the bill. The state has financially choked schools over the last decade and absorbed their fund balances. Maybe the bill will tell us which curriculum piece is less important since it would be replacing something else currently being taught. Will this come out of math time? Maybe reduce reading time? It doesn't say.

A legislator who votes "no" does not necessarily feel handwriting is not important. They simply understand that some bills are untimely, misplaced and potentially damaging even if well-intended. It gives the message to our local communities that they don't trust their leadership nor do they care about the priorities of their community. It demonstrates an indifference to the individual financial challenges, which were created at the state level and passed down to the individual school districts. Most of all, it shows a real disconnect between those making the laws and those having the challenge of implementing them.

Darren J. Root, Ed.S. & CSBO  
Superintendent  
Auburn Community Unit School Dist. #10