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## **DVDs cannot replace teachers**

By: State Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit)

Recently, Senator Ron Johnson suggested students would be better off with a good DVD in every classroom rather than a good teacher. He suggested that instead of having history teachers, schools should merely pop in a copy of Ken Burns' Civil War documentary. That same argument surrounds Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), wherein expert professors record a lecture that is accessible online by thousands, or even millions of students.

There's no question that technology opens up new opportunities for learning. From TED Talks to MOOCs to Skype, teachers now have the ability to bring expertise into the classroom from around the globe, even to the most remote places. One teacher can now teach a class via streaming video to students in multiple small, rural districts that lack the ability to offer the class on their own. Everyone supports schools taking advantage of technology to create the best educational opportunities for their students.

But we cannot simply manufacture students. Education is more than uploading data into a brain, like the names of generals or dates of battles. It is about digging deeper, discussing and analyzing complex issues and ideas. Education is about developing analytical and critical thinking skills that can be applied throughout one's life to a variety of different topics.

Developing those skills requires teachers, which cannot be replaced by technology. Senator Johnson, and those who seek to replace brick and mortar schools, colleges, and universities, fail to understand this.

The best teachers are not necessarily the most charismatic lecturers, or the foremost experts in history or science or literature. The best teachers are those who can create engaging, individual and group learning experiences for their students. They understand and meet the needs of diverse learners, and help students develop the skills necessary to engage with the world throughout their lives. These skills cannot develop by just watching a video.

Teachers also play a critical role in shaping students as people. Both inside and outside the classroom, teachers are mentors and coaches; they provide advice about careers, and about life. Teachers care about their students, and sometimes may be the only people who do. They form

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relationships that may last a lifetime. Replacing teachers with technology will severely diminish classrooms as places to foster growth as a human.

Funding both K-12 and higher education looms as a critical issue for our state and our country, as does the success of our students, if we want to stay globally competitive. We must look at creative solutions to reduce costs and increase learning. We should use technology to broaden the horizons for our students, but we must also invest in our schools and our teachers.

We must not fall into the trap of treating education as an assembly line, solely used to churn out walking containers of facts and formulas. We must never think that technology can replace the committed, caring teachers and professors who can change lives, and make a difference for generations to come.

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