

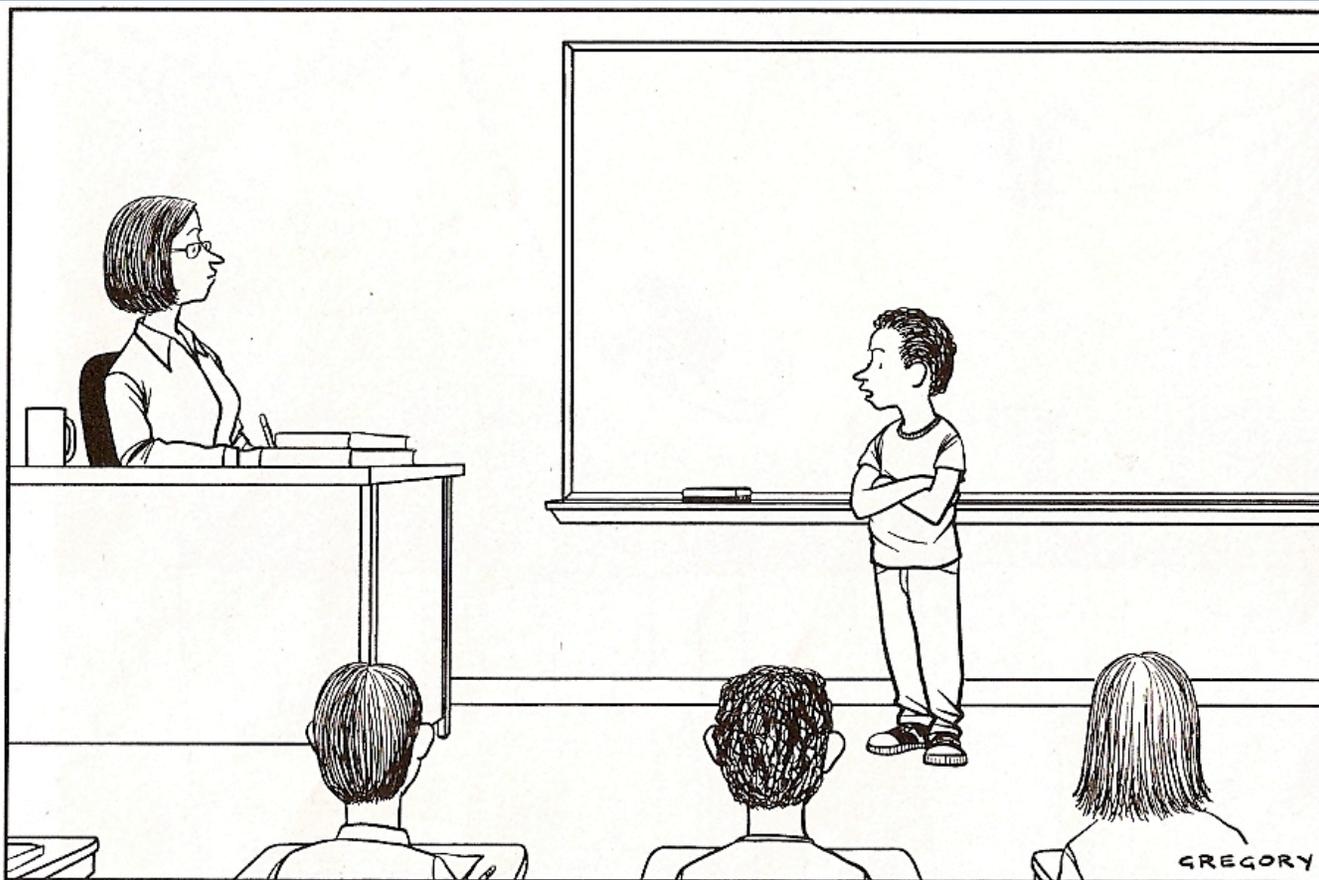
Mason County League of Women Voters Consensus Report

National Study on the Role of the Federal Government in Education

Nov. 2011

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Things have changed



*“Anyone following me on Twitter already knows
what I did this past summer.”*

Major concerns about U.S. education

- ✓ International comparisons show that the US is slipping academically. Educational improvement is a tremendous national challenge.
- ✓ “Today, more than ever, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success. America was once the best educated nation in the world. A generation ago, we led all nations in college completion, but today, 10 countries have passed us.” Blueprint for reauthorization of ESEA, (p. 1)
- ✓ Some researchers caution against overly simplistic interpretations saying that the underlying problem is poverty in America. When data are examined closely, the US does as well as other developed countries when children of poverty are excluded from the reports. Note that U.S. child poverty rates are higher than other developed countries.

Scope of the Study

- ✓ This study is limited to the role of the federal government, specifically with regard to : national common core standards, national assessment and curriculum, federal funding, support for early childhood education and students with disabilities and related equity issues.
- ✓ The League developed 15 questions to provide structure for discussion and consensus building. Detailed study materials were provided for background information. Our study was limited to these questions and answer choices.

Timeline and Methodology

- ✓ This study was proposed and passed at the June 2010 biennial LWV convention in Atlanta, GA. Study materials, leaders' guide, consensus questions and resources were developed Nov. 2010-April 2011.
- ✓ The Mason County League opted to join the study Sept. 2011. The study committee met several times, read the extensive resource materials and discussed the consensus questions. Two consensus meetings, open to all members, were held at the Shelton Library

Timeline and Methodology

- ✓ At the October 18th regular meeting a panel with Joan Zook, former Superintendent of Shelton Schools, Representative Kathy Haigh, and Shawn Lewis of OSPI discussed these issues and answered questions from League members and guests.
- ✓ The committee reported its consensus results to the LWVMC board on Nov. 7. They were approved and will be submitted to LWVUS by Nov.30. A final national report will be issued in March 2012 and will be the basis for the LWVUS position.

A little history of federal role in K-12 education

- ✓ Prior to the 1950's, federal involvement in education was almost nonexistent. This changed after the *1954 Brown vs Bd. of Education* Supreme Court decision.
- ✓ 1965 first Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed to provide greater equality of opportunity by allocating additional funding to districts with high concentrations of low income families. The funds are categorical, intended to help specific targeted students.
- ✓ 1970 a separate program was created and funded for special needs students under IDEA.

More history

- ✓ 94% of U.S. school districts have received ESEA funding, but it adds less than 10% to local education budgets. The bulk of education funding comes from the states and from local taxes.
- ✓ ESEA is reauthorized every 10 years. 2001 “No Child Left Behind” is the most recent iteration. It expanded testing and accountability requirements and dramatically increased and reshaped the federal role in education.
- ✓ The 2009 “Race to the Top” is a federal competitive grant with very specific criteria separate from ESEA

Question 2

What should be the role of the federal government in public education?

Rank order of list of 5:

1. To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education.
2. To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12.
3. To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress.

Note: no consensus on # 4 and 5

Our rationale for not supporting using test scores for teacher evaluation

- ✓ There is broad agreement among statisticians, psychometricians, and economists that student test scores alone are not sufficiently reliable and valid indicators of teacher effectiveness to be used in high-stakes personnel decisions, even when the most sophisticated statistical applications such as value-added modeling are employed.
- ✓ Would be very difficult to do this fairly as so many variables are involved.

Question 3

A quality education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.

a. Strongly agree

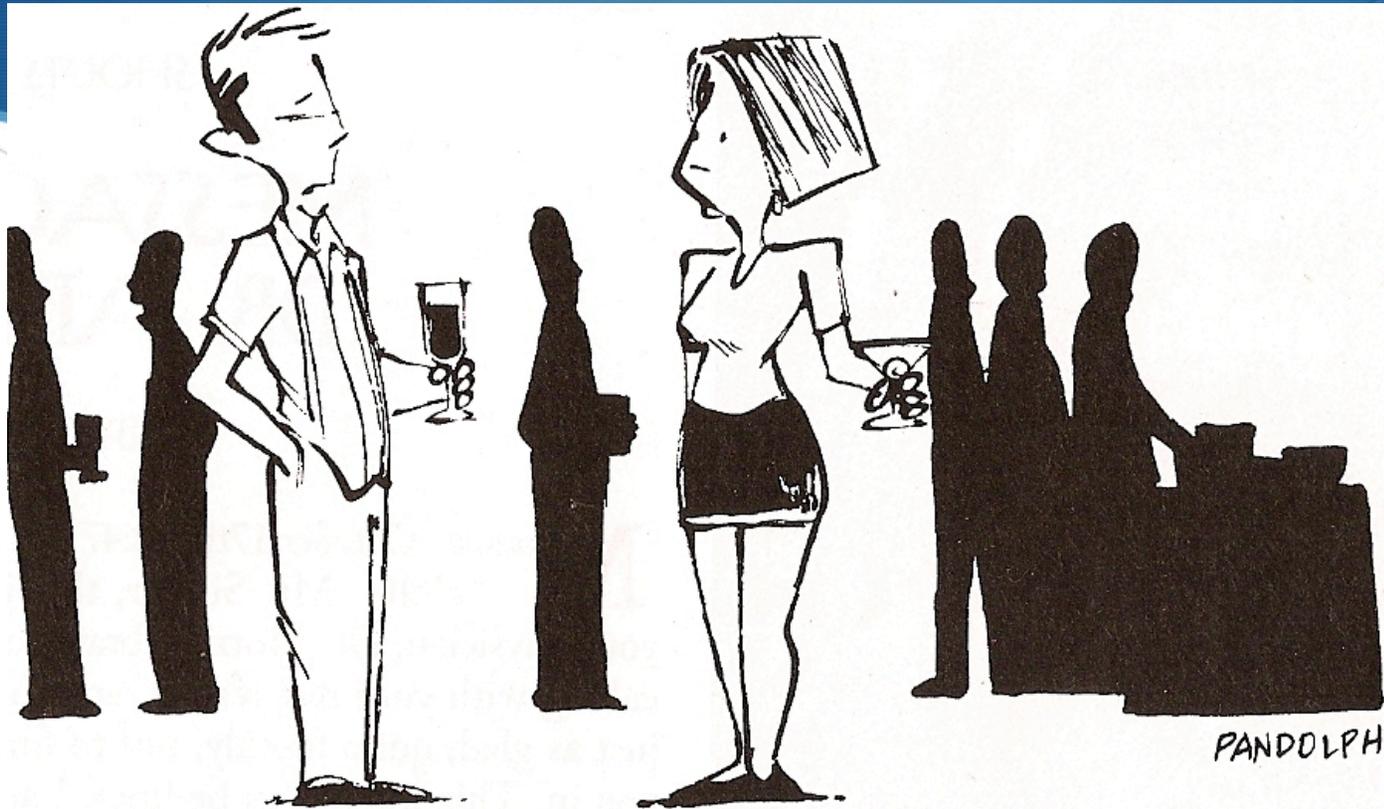
What are Common Core Standards?

- ✓ The result of a cooperative effort of the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and endorsed by 41 states including Washington. Core subject areas are Math and English Language Arts, grades K-12. More to be added.
- ✓ Designed to bring alignment, rigor and consistency to student 'proficiency' and to foster improvement in college and workforce readiness across the nation.

Need for CCS

- ✓ Currently standards for student performance and requirements for high school graduation vary widely from state to state. Assessments also vary widely in rigor and scope.
- ✓ Common Core Standards will help ensure students are receiving a high quality education consistently nationwide.
- ✓ Provide the opportunity to share best practices to improve teaching.

High expectations



“Personally, I think this country was in trouble when we decided to make sliced bread the high-water mark.”

Question 4

Common Core Standards :

Currently the governors and state education officers have developed Common Core Standards that are national, but not federal. Should the standards be mandated of the states in order to obtain federal funding? (Choose one)

- a. Special grant programs such as Race to the Top
- b. All programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding
- c. All programs receiving federal funding from any source.
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

Question 5

Common Core Standards Assessment

Should there be a national assessment aligned with the common core standards?

Yes

Question 5-a

If yes, should implementation be voluntary or federally mandated (Choose one)

c. Mandated, if fully funded

Question 6

National standards should lead to

(Choose one)

c. A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum.

Should there be a national curriculum?

Our consensus was: No

- ✓ Various educators have been debating whether national standards and national assessments would be enough to bring about desired improvements.
- ✓ Some think that a comprehensive system, including a national curriculum as well as common standards and assessment, is necessary to foster improvement.
- ✓ Some think that a national curriculum would bring unnecessary constraints that stifle creativity and innovation.

Question 7

What role should the national assessment consortia play in student evaluation? (Rank order)

1. a. Provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards
2. d. Provide information to students, parents, teachers, and school districts about student achievement
3. b. Provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching the Common Core Standards.
4. c. Provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers
5. e. Provide diagnostic information on each child

Question 8

National Assessment Data

Data from national assessments are often difficult for parents, teachers and others to understand. If we have a national assessment, what information is most important to be reported to parents, teachers, students and the community?

b. Data should be “criterion referenced” and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level.

Question 9

Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to:

a. Inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs

Question 10

Should ESEA funding be competitive grants or non-competitive based on need?

- a. Non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements

Question 11

If the federal government's role is for the “common good” then:

b. Mandates and funding should both be provided.

Question 12

Equity in public education means equitable access to:
(rank order)

- 1.a High quality teaching/learning
- 2.b Adequate and current teaching materials
- 3.c Clean and well maintained physical facilities
- 4.d Food and health care
5. e Safe and secure neighborhoods
6. f Secure housing

Question 13

Should ESEA funding remain targeted toward poverty and special needs?

Currently Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding is considered “categorical” rather than for general use. This means that it can only be used with special populations for special purposes.

Strongly agree

Question 14

The federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5:

Strongly agree

Question 15

Should federal support for early childhood programs be expanded to include parent education, child health and nutrition, and mental health as needed?

15a. Strongly agree

15b. This funding should be extended to :

All children

Special Education Funding

- ✓ Federal funding under IDEA, (in 2004 called IDEIA) was projected to provide up to 40% of expenses but was never higher than the current level (17%)
- ✓ State receives federal funding and passes on to Local Education Agency (LEAs)
- ✓ Local: allotments based on:
 - Number of students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
 - Excess costs fall to local school districts

Question 1

The current role of the federal government in public education is:

a. Much too small

Note: This was the cumulative question which we considered at the beginning and end before reaching consensus

Issues to consider about policy decisions in the future

- Is the proposed policy of common core standards and assessment consistent with support of quality public education? How will these be effectively implemented?
- What unintended consequences could result from following this policy of the common core standards/assessment?
- If test scores are involved, do educational measurement experts agree that the proposed procedures are technically adequate?
- What happens when a school or district is not making progress? How will teaching be improved?