

**League of Women Voters
Education Study 2011 Consensus
Compiled report**

12 people attended week 1

8 people attended week 2

General Questions

1. The current role of the federal government in public education is

Much too small too small about right too large much too large

About right (6) (5) Many marked funding after too small, especially in week 2

There was an agreement that the "about right" role was leaning towards "too large" since most federal monies are attached to requirements which are promoting a specific agenda. As such, it is often not possible for an LEA to use monies where needed, thus leading, at times, to inequities within a district as well as within states.

The discussion included a general lack of confidence that the federal government can / should be making educational decisions that supersede local elected school boards.

Likewise, a large discussion and concern about the current movement to vouchers and charter schools which drain monies away from public schools and which will lead to the eventual privatization of public education.

2. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? (Rank)

a. To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education.

b. To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress.

c. To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12.

d. To monitor state efforts for funding

e. To measure teacher effectiveness through test data.

1. A 2. D 3. C 4. B 5. E

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

Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

Strongly agree -12 and 8

Please share any comments your League has concerning the topics covered in the General Consensus Questions. (250 word maximum)

Generally, consensus in public education is very important to maintain and perpetuate a strong and viable democracy. Federal funding which was historically provided to equalize the educational opportunities by providing funding in high poverty and ethnically disadvantaged areas has evolved into a complex system aimed at pushing a federal agenda that may or may not be desired by the local communities. The current favoring of charter and voucher schools that pull money away from the public schools is of great concern. There seems to be a rapid and forceful movement towards privatizing public schools. We are concerned that the success and seeming advocacy of this movement by the federal government will erode and eventually do away with public schools thus damaging the foundation of our democracy.

Common Core Standards

4. 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)
- Special grant programs such as Race to the Top
 - All programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding.
 - All programs receiving federal funding from any source
 - All of the above
 - None of the above

a) 11 b) 3

Still favoring "local control" of curricular decisions, there was a general unwillingness to tie all programs of ESEA to the CCSS, so as to not deprive some needy children of assistance simply because their state has chosen to not comply completely with CCSS.

5. Should there be a **national assessment aligned** with the common cores standards?

Yes **X (unanimously)** No

If Yes, Should implementation be voluntary or federally mandated? (choose one)

- Voluntary
- Mandated (**every 3-4 years**)
- Mandated, if fully funded **X consensus**

If No, what other accountability measures might you suggest? (choose one)

- Continue to allow the states to develop their own assessments.
- Suggest that the local education districts use their own assessments or adopt one that is a nationally norm-referenced assessment such as the *Stanford Achievement Test* or *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*.
- Suggest that districts use a portfolio type of assessment where student projects and activities would be scored holistically

6. National standards should lead to: (choose one)
- A nationally mandated curriculum to be aligned to the national standards and assessments.
 - A national curriculum that is only suggested but not mandated. **(3)**
 - A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum. **(8)**
 - No national curriculum.

A favoring of "local control" and local decision making about individual curricular and lesson decisions, but an acceptance and desire for a rigorous uniform structure provided for all to use.

7. What role should the national assessment consortia play in student evaluation? (Rank order)
- Provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards.
 - Provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards.
 - Provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers.
 - Provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement.
 - Provide diagnostic information on each child.

a) 1 b) 3 c) 4 d) 2 --- e was omitted by most as it seemed too lofty of an idea as a result of a single test. The test may provide some portion of a diagnosis, but it cannot and should not be the sole piece of diagnostic information for any child's learning profile.

8. Data from the 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? (choose one)
- Data should be "norm referenced" (where students are ranked) for district comparison only.
 - 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.
 - Data should be used to determine "cut" scores knowing if students have mastered requirements for special grade levels.

b) 11 c) 1

9. Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to (Choose one):
- Sanction schools not measuring up to the specific levels
 - Reward schools that achieve high scores
 - Rank teachers based on student test score data
 - Reward teachers who have exemplary scores
 - Inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs.

Unanimously E

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Generally, we are supportive of the CCSS but we're concerned about the federal government imposing these onto schools through funding ESEA and federal grants. We believe that the structure of the CCSS in conjunction with an aligned assessment system can be used by state and local education agencies to make decisions appropriate to their own students, but that CCSS should not be mandated by the federal government. We also believe that the assessments should be criterion referenced and provide the maximum amount of information possible, with today's technologies, to inform a school about the achievement and abilities of individual students. These test results should be used to inform a district about how their students compare to others, but should not be used, as the sole criteria, to evaluate and rank teachers and schools.

Funding and Equity

10. In the past most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding has been non-competitive based on need. All/Any Schools that prove they fall under the federal guidelines for funding receive those funds. However, competitive grants are now being proposed to states/districts who meet certain federal requirements, such as Race to the Top. Which would be appropriate: (choose one)
- Non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements (2)
 - A combination of non-competitive and competitive grants (6)
 - Competitive grants only
 - No federal funding

We would like to add a selection E) Fully funding current mandates—IDEA at 40% rather than the historic high and current level of 17% would go a long way to assist schools in making the best educational decisions for all children.

11. If the federal government's role is the concern of the "common good" then: (choose one)
- Mandates only should be sanctioned.
 - Mandates and funding should both be provided.
 - Funding should be provided through grants only.
 - A combination of funded mandates and grants should apply. (7)
 - No mandates should be required and limited grants for innovation available.

12. Equity in public education means equitable access to: (Rank order)
- high quality teaching/learning 1
 - adequate and current learning materials 2
 - clean and well maintained physical facilities 6
 - food and health care 3
 - safe and secure neighborhoods 5
 - secure housing 4

There was a lot of discussion regarding the inclusion of d, e, f as part of the role / duty of public education. These are of great importance in the educating and equitable care of a child and family, but they are not and should not be the sole responsibility of a school system. This led to a long discussion regarding the importance and the education effect of solving the poverty problem. Poverty is increasing and is the distinguishing factor when looking at achievement gaps. So, is solving the problem of poverty a school responsibility or a community, state and federal responsibility? Can students who do not have their basic needs of safety, housing and nourishment able to be educated? Where does the role of the school begin and end?

13. 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. ESEA should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs.

Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

Strongly agree-- unanimous

14. The federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children?

Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

Strongly agree-- unanimous

15. Federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g.Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed.

a. Strongly Agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly Disagree

Strongly agree-- unanimous

b. This funding should be extended to:

All children only those with special needs special needs first

All children—unanimous, but question...Would we really fund this for ALL children? A comprehensive caring for children from birth through school age, would greatly enhance later levels of achievement and lessen the likelihood for public assistance and criminal behavior. Generally, we believe that this would be a good investment of tax money and would make the greatest impact in subsequent years for all children.

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Generally, we feel that the fed government should fully fund its current obligations; i.e. IDEA at 40%. The special education population has increased dramatically over the last several decades and funding has remained at about 17%. The proportion of the children living in poverty in the US has dramatically increased in recent years and as a result, educational needs are expanding. We believe that without addressing the problem of poverty, the problems of education will continue to fester. We believe that all interested parties: students, parents, schools, local, state and fed governments and private agencies must all collaborate to alleviate the negative impact of poverty on student educational achievement.

Furthermore, we believe that early childhood education programs have a great impact on future achievement and should be fully supported to garner the greatest future impact of dollars spent on these programs to assist mothers, pre-school age children and families. A comprehensive caring for children from birth through school age, would greatly enhance later levels of achievement and lessen the likelihood for public assistance and criminal behavior. Generally, we believe that this would be a good investment of tax money and would make the greatest impact in subsequent years for all children.