



League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

October 2011

www.lwvka.org

Co-Presidents: Connie Ferguson and Paula Manley

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Education Study

By Denise Hartsough

LWVKA members are invited to a consensus meeting on the "Role of the Federal Government in Education" on Wednesday, November 9 at 7 p.m. at the Greater Kalamazoo United Way, 709 S. Westnedge. Consensus questions focus on a) common core standards and assessment, and b) funding and equity, including funding for special education and early childhood education.

Concise briefs are available at www.lwv.org. Click on For Members, Projects and Programs, Public Education, then, in the Voter Ready Articles box, click on Read the Articles.

Briefs that have appeared in the LWVKA *Bulletin* are "History" (August 2011) and "Funding and Equity" (September 2011). This issue includes the brief on "Common Core Standards." For briefs on "Special Education" and "Early Childhood Education," please see the webpage described above.

If you would like to provide input but cannot participate on November 9, please send your responses to the consensus questions to dhartsough@charter.net or **Denise Hartsough**, 2690 Timberleaf Ln., Kalamazoo, MI 49006 by November 2.

Common Core Standards From lwv.org website

Students who move from one part of the United States to another during their K-12 school careers are likely to encounter substantial variations in requirements for graduation. The Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI, 2010) stated: "We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices

Calendar

Sept 28 Kalamazoo City Commission Candidate Event

Wed. Friendship Village, Kiva Room
7:15-9 pm 1400 N. Drake Rd., Kalamazoo

Sept 29 New Experiences through Dialogue

Thurs. Ladies' Library Association
6:00 pm 333 S. Park St., Kalamazoo
Refreshments served. RSVP to president@lwvka.org or 544-0303 by 9/23 or as soon as possible.

Oct 11 Allegan City Council Candidate Forum

Tues. Allegan District Library,
7-8:30 pm 331 Hubbard St., Allegan

Oct 12 Take Action for Convenient Voting

Wed. St. Paul's Episcopal Church
9 am - 4 pm 218 W. Ottawa St., Lansing
See <http://lwvmi.org/events.html> for details and registration

Oct 18 Board Meeting

Tues. The Park Club
5:30 pm 219 W. South St, Kalamazoo
Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
Questions? Call 269-544-0303 or email president@lwvka.org for more information.

Note: Board meets on 3rd Tuesdays.

Continued on page 7

Education Study continued

within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students."

Currently, standards for student performance vary widely by state. The roots of current state-to-state inconsistencies lie in the fact that public education in the United States has traditionally been a local responsibility. However, textbook publishers have created something of a "de facto" national curriculum, based on market needs. Consequently, many textbooks from major publishers have reflected the curricular choices that were made by educational groups in the largest states. Some publishers do create textbooks and other curricula for smaller markets.

Rothman (2009) summarized the efforts of various groups to create common standards across the United States. Initial efforts to foster development of national standards and a related system of assessments in the core subject areas began in the early 1990s through awarding grants to a dozen national organizations.

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the Common Core State Standards initiative in March 2009 after the nation's governors agreed in concept to adopt a uniform set of standards. The final report was issued on June 2, 2010 (NGA, 2010), and, by early 2011, 40 states have adopted the Standards. The adopting states are currently aligning them to their own state standards.

The Fordham Institute (Carmichael, et al. 2010) reported that the Common Core standards received high marks when compared to state standards across the coun-

try. The Institute suggests that Common Core Standards represent an opportunity for creating consistency and raising standards in all states.

Assessments

The implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has created a 50-state and 50-test environment in public education. As a result state-to-state expectations and performances vary greatly. States publish annual reports of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which are required by federal law, but the meaning of "proficient" in those reports can vary widely from one state to another (Cronin, et al. 2007).

Larger testing companies market a variety of norm-referenced standardized tests. However, they are designed to rank students, rather than to determine how well students have mastered curricular objectives as criterion-referenced tests would do. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) publishes results that are technically adequate for state-to-state (and international) comparisons, but that assessment is not designed to produce individual student scores. NAEP requires a large sample of students to produce results. Most school systems are too small to qualify for testing that would produce local NAEP results. The tradition of local governance has led to inconsistent requirements and standards for student performance across the country. Thus, in 2010, the United States does not have a consistent set of academic assessments for grades K-12.

Education Study continued

Two coalitions, together representing 44 states and the District of Columbia, won a U.S. Department of Education competition for \$330 million dollars federal aid to design “comprehensive assessment systems” aligned to the Common Core and designed to measure whether students are on track for college and career success. The awards, announced in September 2010, were divided between the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), comprised of 26 states receiving \$170 million, and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium that comprises 31 states and received \$160 million. At least 12 states participated in both coalitions and are waiting to decide which assessment system will best meet their needs. An advantage of having assessments that are used in more than one state is that results from all participating states could be compared.

Why not national standards or assessments?

The most common arguments against adopting the Common Core Standards for K-12 center on two issues: 1) the cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments and (2) the sovereignty of states in issues related to education and local control. Governor Rick Perry of Texas stated that the Race to the Top funding would only generate a one-time amount of \$75 per student, yet cost Texas taxpayers an additional \$3 million. A third argument is that the individual state standards might be more rigorous. However, states that adopt the Common Core are permitted to add 15 percent more in content.

Another concern is the potential to use scores from the student assessments as a

major component of teacher evaluations and merit pay plans, an idea that has popular appeal. (*TIME*, 2010). In August 2010, ten of the nation’s premier educational researchers (Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, Ladd, Linn, Ravtich, Rothstein, Shavelson & Shepard, 2010) coauthored a report that cautioned against relying on student test scores as a major indicator for evaluating teachers, citing the technical problems associated with using scores from standardized student assessments in value-added statistical models.

Does the United States need a national curriculum?

The U.S. Department of Education presents the view that, since the developers of the Common Core Standards and the proposed assessments have been groups with state representation rather than the federal government, neither program is a federal initiative. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, March 13). In March 2011, the Albert Shanker Institute issued a call for common curriculum guidelines (Albert Shanker Institute, 2011; Gewertz, C. 2011, March). This document voices the concern that common assessments are being developed from the common standards with no curriculum in between. In May 2011, another group published an article with a different view: “Closing the Door on Innovation: Why One National Curriculum is Bad for America” (2011), discussed by Gewertz, C. (2011, May). The article also cites the prohibition against a federal curriculum contained in the 1965 ESEA.

Education Study — Consensus Questions

Education Study Consensus 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

2. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? (Rank)
- To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education.
 - To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress.
 - To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12.
 - To monitor state efforts for funding
 - To measure teacher effectiveness through test data.
3. A quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.

Strongly agree Agree No consensus
Disagree Strongly disagree

Comments:

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

Yes No

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

- Voluntary
- Mandated
- Mandated, if fully funded

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.
 - A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum.
 - No national curriculum.
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.
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)

continued on page 5

Consensus Questions continued

- 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.
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.

Comments:

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
 - A combination of non-competitive and competitive grants
 - Competitive grants only
 - No federal funding
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.

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
 - adequate and current learning materials
 - clean and well maintained physical facilities
 - food and health care
 - safe and secure neighborhoods
 - secure housing
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

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

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

- b. This funding should be extended to:

All children only those with special needs
special needs first

Comments:

News From National and State

From LWVUS

White House Meeting on Ozone Regulation

In mid-August, the League's Executive Director **Nancy Tate** participated in a meeting at The White House with Chief of Staff **William Daley**, and staff from the EPA and the Office of Management and Budget, concerning EPA's proposal for a stricter ozone regulation. We urged the Administration to release the regulation, which is being opposed by business and other interests. Mr. Daley expressed interest in the League's work to protect the Clean Air Act and our current Clean Air Promise campaign. [Read a press release on the meeting.](#)

No Summer Vacation for the League's Redistricting Experts

The League has not slowed its efforts to promote a fair and accountable redistricting process. In August, national League President **Elisabeth MacNamara** joined longtime Congressman and civil rights leader Rep. **John Lewis**, voting rights experts and 300+ individuals at a special event [highlighting the continuing importance of the Voting Rights Act](#) in protecting voters' rights during redistricting.

Elections: Congressional Redistricting Status Report

A special event, "[Congressional Redistricting: A Status Report](#)" (see video) was held

in July at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC. The event featured national redistricting experts, including several League partners, who provided a status update on Congressional redistricting nationwide. The speakers touched upon several aspects of redistricting at the heart of many Leagues' efforts, including the impact of recent reforms in California and Florida, efforts to increase transparency and public participation, and likely Voting Rights Act challenges to redistricting proposals in Texas, North Carolina, and elsewhere. Learn more at www.lwv.org/redistricting.

From LWVMI

Tapping the Power: Voter Service and the New Media

In preparation for the 2012 election season, the LWVMI State Board invites League leaders to participate in regional gatherings to help re-energize LWV work in communities throughout Michigan. The events will begin with registration at 10 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m. The closest one to us is October 22 at St. Joseph/Maud Palenske Public Library, 500 Market St, St. Joseph, MI. The purpose of these capacity building events is to tap into the true power of the League - networking with other League leaders. We hope all local League officers, board members - and potential leaders will attend.

continued on page 7

News From National and State



Take Action for Convenient Voting will take place on Wednesday, October 12, 2011 in Lansing

The [purpose of the event](#) is for members to learn about the status of voting and elections legislation, develop and practice advocacy skills, and meet with legislators to discuss convenient voting measures, with a focus on "no reason ab-

sentee voting." One goal of the event is to build stronger support for "no reason absentee voting". We also would like to form a core team of advocates who will continue to work with us on the issue. The event is free but registration is required so that delegations can be organized for legislative visits. See <http://lwvmi.org> for details and registration information.

Voter Registration

By Karen Eddy

During the September 6 KVCC Cougar Connection, LWVKA volunteers received 29 voter applications. Many clarifying discussions about voting also occurred. **Barbara Huber, Sue Nelmes, Charlotte Russell, Paula Aldridge, Beverly Byle, Janet Nykaza, Mary Gustas and Karen Eddy** volunteered.

At the WMU Bronco Bash on September 9, **Sara Wick, Beverly Byle and Yoland Mitts** aided 11 students in filling out voter registration applications, and handed out many more to be completed by students.

Calendar continued

Oct 22 Tapping the Power: Voter Service and the New Media

Sat. 10 am - 3 pm
LWVMI Workshop
St. Joseph/Maud Palenske Public Library
500 Market St., St. Joseph
See lwvmi.org for more info.

Oct 26 Water Quality Forum - Kalamazoo Environmental Council

Wed. 7 pm
LWVMI Workshop
Fetzer Center, WMU
Panel featuring Jeff Spoelstra of the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council & John Paquin, Environmental Programs Manager for the City of Kalamazoo

Note: Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings.

Lake Michigan LWV Annual Meeting

The 2011 annual meeting of the Lake Michigan LWV is being held October 21 and 22 in Oak Lawn, Illinois. **Todd Main**, Deputy Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will give the keynote address on invasive species. There will also be tours focused on the interplay of wilderness areas with industry and landfills, restoring wetlands, and removing invasive species. **Ruth Caputo** will represent LWVKA. If you would also like to attend, please contact her at 323-1538 or ruth1281@att.net.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Kalamazoo Area
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New Member Profile

**We
welcome
Fran
Eckenrode**

By Norma Clack

Fran Eckenrode joined LWVKA earlier this year with encouragement from her friend, member **Ruth Caputo**.

Originally from Virginia, Fran moved to Michigan and worked at Pfizer for 25 years in bioprocessing research and development. The last 18 months of her career with Pfizer were spent in Ireland – an eye-opening experience that she thoroughly enjoyed. After her retirement last year, she renewed her pharmaceutical license and now works as an on-call pharmacist at the Borgess Medical Center outpatient pharmacy.

In addition to her new career, Fran also enjoys having time now to branch out into other areas of personal interest. Her favorite hobby is ballroom dancing and she be-

longs to a club that meets weekly. Fran enjoys taking her dog to an “obedience training and tricks” class. She is also researching other volunteer opportunities that may be available in the world of medicine. With the League, she is assisting with voter registration at the Department of Health and Human Services and looks forward to participating in some other League activities.

With low-paying jobs

Some struggle each day.

Earned income tax credits

Are part of their pay.

-- Government is us!