



The Literacy Education Policy Landscape in Summer, 2011

Shifting Sands...

Underlying themes...

- Reduced federal role in school reform
 - Mantra for fiscal conservatives—cut spending/reduce federal role, But state-based reform comes with...
 - More flexible requirements and funding for Charters;
 - Encouragement of measures to tie teacher pay to tests
 - State legislative efforts to undercut union job protection practices;
 - Supported by some on the left who associate federal policy with over-reliance on testing/the evils of NCLB
 - Supported, somewhat, by the administration who would rather use federal and foundation grant incentives to drive reform than title funding or targeted programs.
 - Viewed suspiciously by some civil rights groups and public education advocates who see it as a way of de-funding public schools and de-emphasizing equal opportunity measures.

Program

- ESEA/NCLB reform
- Common Core Standards Implementation
- Assessment consortia plans for 2013-14 implementation
- LEARN Act
- Reinstatement of funding for NWP, NBPTS, other “earmarks”
- Reform of teacher ed accreditation

Prospects

- Murky; AYP suspension possible; but may just be a threat to drive ESEA passage.
- Going forward, but degree of flexibility will be contested;
- Currently on a fast track; educator input critically important
- Most flexible NCLB reform possible
- Partial funding through a competitive program
- CAEP emerging—more flexibility for institutions, perhaps less influence by SPAs. Emergence of TPAC.

What's At Play in the Year to Come

ESEA/NCLB Reform

- Big split between Senate HELP committee and House—obviously partisan. AYP formula escalation turns this into a higher priority; but embarrassing public education serves the agenda of some.
- Tying teacher pay/quality measures to test scores—opposed by NCTE--now a much more mainstream proposition; but if the tests are changing, how would this work?
- LEARN Act, backed by NCTE, NWP, and all literacy advocacy groups, could have been a substantial reform; not much GOP interest at present. They seem most interested in something akin to a block grant approach to reforming ESEA/title legislation. Conservative agenda moves faster at state levels.

Common Core Standards Implementation

- Predictably, all kinds of groups are claiming that their materials are standards-aligned. NCTE, IRA, and NCTM are pressing for someone to vet these claims since they could lead to a narrowing of the curriculum.
- Gates and Pearson Foundation are using the Common Core to develop a “model” national curriculum.
- NCTE supports teachers/teacher-teams in crafting their own approaches to advancing student literacy and in making innovative plans accessible to all.

PARCC and Smarter Balanced Consortia

- Legitimacy/grant proposals grounded in alignment to Common Core/college readiness
- Both blend summative with through-course performance/formative assessments, with the goal of providing useful information to teachers, schools, parents. Problem: this could lead to homogenization, narrowing of curriculum, stronger case for tying pay to test scores, and dependence on unproven AI testing protocols.
- NCTE is working to get educators in the planning process.

Changes in Teacher Accreditation

- NCATE/CAEP seeking to seize mantle of reform through reports like “Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice” and new paths to national recognition.
- As institutions gain more options, the influence of program standards supplied by specialized professional associations wanes—for better or worse.
- Paradox—while policy community proceeds as if public education is in a downward spiral and tries to leverage basic support as incentive for change, recent public polls from [Gallup](#) and MetLife suggests that parents see quality of local schools at an all time high.

2011 NCTE Education Policy

Platform

- Focus on school teams and teacher decision-making as the locus for change.
- Call for real investment in improving conditions to advance literacy learning.
- Document teacher quality through professional practices.
- State flexibility through use of grant teams that include literacy educators and school leaders

Understanding What Can Be Done

By Individuals...

- More flexibility to speak with passion...
 - SOS March July 28
 - Raise awareness in your local professional communities
 - Leverage the power of your personal examples and build relationships with legislators/their aides.
 - Use NCTE positions and research selectively to secure the gains you can.

By NCTE...

- More opportunity to forge alliances and speak with authority, but...
- Less freedom to speak/act without concern for consequences to our broader community and literacy learners.
- Where incremental gains for our principles/constituencies are possible, we have an ethical responsibility to pay attention to the “art of the possible” and not stop at asserting “the truth”.
- Rely upon members’ and students’ stories to make our case stick.

Long Term Progress

- Building evidentiary base for improving student learning by improving support for adequate learning conditions—NCLE and NCTE sponsored research and PD.
- Building reputation for sensible strategies, high-quality research—frequent meetings and symposia with decision-makers

Short term Impact

- Letters/blogs/media interviews on pending policy decisions.
- Demonstration events like National Day, school visits, protest actions.

Short- vs Long-Term Strategies

The Way Forward--the Power of Collaborations

- Use PISA/international studies about what makes school systems effective, shared values and beliefs among most education groups, and expectations of parents and business to create new narrative of success.
- Weave together local success stories to look critically at what happens in successful literacy programs—how educators collaborate and learn across a career span; supportive roles that administrators, teacher ed programs, and community groups play; what policies accelerate or inhibit progress.
- Look for openings—AYP waivers as a means of introducing Literacy in Every Classroom Schools; Try to leverage GOP talk about local vs federal authority as a means of contesting national tests/curricula.