

Nationalizing Education

Given the nationwide consequences wrought by Katrina, now is the time to nationalize education. Currently we allow states and/or local districts to control curriculum and funding in the name of "states rights". States rights end at the state line, by definition. Education transcends state boundaries. Hurricane Katrina has made this painfully obvious.

A recent "study" (non-scientific) conducted by the Washington Post, et. al., found that 2/3 of displaced New Orleans intend to remain in Houston permanently. Some of the 300 who fled to Washington D.C. intend to remain there. The Post article stated over 372,000 students have been displaced by Katrina.

We fund education at the local level, primarily with local property taxes. The displaced students in school districts are not contributing funds via property taxes. Many of them are homeless and their parents unemployed. Mountain Brooke students' schools receive more funding and have fewer students than Selma's schools due to the local property taxes and number of children per household. In some Virginia counties the property taxes are redistributed across school districts. This is not a common practice, particularly in the Southern states ravaged by Katrina.

The cycle of poverty starts at birth. A child born into poverty is forced into poor schools. Their education in these schools makes them less capable of competing for jobs and placement in better universities if at all. The poor quality of compulsory (K-12) education they receive, the socio-economic status of their parents, and other factors causes students born into poverty to lack the necessary skills for successfully graduating from colleges and universities (see documents on minority graduation rates). They lack the required reading, reading comprehension, and writing skills necessary to succeed collegiately and vocationally. Furthermore, in some counties, over 80% of students do not graduate from high school because of the severity of poverty.

The only way to break the cycle of poverty and to "clear away the legacy of inequality" is to fix the educational system, to nationalize education. Every child deserves the same quality of public education irrespective of the socio-economic status of the family in which they were born. Our current infrastructure of funding education harms or benefits children based upon the luck of the draw; i.e., the family in which they are born.

Alabama schools rank 47th in the country; Mississippi schools rank 49th - 50th. Now, students from the Katrina ravaged states are attending schools all across the country including California, Texas, Illinois, Alabama, and Washington D.C. Many of the 372,000 students will be "left behind". Curriculum is not consistent across districts within a state much more across state lines. Some children may be moved back a grade simply because of curriculum differences set by the states or local school districts.

The only way to properly fund education is to nationalize it. Nationalization is creating an industry standard, the industry in this instance is education. Every

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country better than us in education has a nationalized educational system. Nationalizing education seems to be the obvious answer. Every student receives the same curriculum, every teacher has the same requirements and training, every school has the same equipment, and every school receives the same per capita funding and has the same teachers per student ratio. Furthermore, the money to fund the 372,000 displaced children would not be an issue. Under the current system, the schools in which they are currently enrolled will suffer even more.

Nationalizing education is not only the most economically sound but also ethical means of funding education.

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