

# CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

Approved by LWVCEF Board of Directors July 11, 2004

## 1. EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Is it the obligation of the state to provide equitable opportunities for teaching and learning systemwide such that every student will be able to meet mandated state standards and to graduate with the skills and knowledge necessary to choose either postsecondary education or immediate entry into gainful employment or both?

- A. If it is the obligation of the state to provide equitable opportunities as stated above, is the state currently meeting this constitutional obligation? (Yes/No) If the answer to 1A is “Yes,” proceed to C; if the answer is “No,” proceed to B.
- B. If the answer to 1A is “No”
  - (1) What obstacles prevent it from doing so?
  - (2) What steps can be taken to improve the equitable delivery of quality public education to all students in California?
  - (3) What are the elements that have to be provided if all students are to receive an equitable opportunity to learn?
- C. Charter schools have been introduced since our last study of education.
  - (1) Are charter schools helping students succeed?
  - (2) What effect, if any, are they having on noncharter public schools?
  - (3) Should they be actively encouraged?
- D. How can the state assist individual school organizations (local districts and school sites) in providing what is needed to maximize the potential for every student to achieve.
- E. A goal of the California Master Plan for Education is to have every child enter school ready to learn.
  - (1) Is this a worthy goal?
  - (2) What proportion of students should be ready to learn to be successful in achieving this goal? (e.g., 70%, 90%...)
  - (3) What interventions are needed to make this happen?
    - a. Universal access to voluntary preschool for all children?
    - b. Universal access for those most at risk?
    - c. What about high-risk families who do not choose to enroll?
  - (4) Does the Master Plan adequately address the parent as the child’s first teacher?

## 2. SCHOOL FINANCE

- A. Given the high standards that are now required of all students in California schools, in what ways can the state exercise its constitutional responsibility to provide sustainable, transparent, adequate, and timely funding to equitably meet the needs of all students?

- (1) Should the state set aside funds for specific purposes (i.e., textbooks, needs of English Language Learners, special education, low socio-economic, etc.)? Please answer Yes or No and give rationale.
- (2) If the state does set aside funding for specific purposes, should the current categorical funding sources remain or should the state move to a block grant concept or weighted student formula for type of students served?
- (3) To which level should state funds be given for local decision-making?

	ALL FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS
County Board/County Office of Education		
School District Board/Superintendent		
School Site Council/School Governance Committee		
Principal		

- (4) Should the state take action to make it possible for schools to seek new revenue locally? Current options for operational funds are parcel tax and Maintenance Assessment District (recreation tax).

### 3. GOVERNANCE

- A. At the state level, how can authority best be aligned with accountability?
- B. How can funding responsibilities be aligned with other governance responsibilities?
- C. Should governance be more centralized, or should there be an improved system of checks and balances among educational policy makers?
- D. Which functions of governance should be locally controlled and which ones are best reserved for the state?
- E. At the state level, which of the following entities should bear the greatest responsibility/power/accountability for the governance of education, or should they be shared?
  - 1) Legislature
  - 2) Governor
  - 3) Secretary for Education
  - 4) State Board of Education (SBE)
  - 5) State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI)

#### **4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT**

- A. Is student assessment helping improve the quality of education and student learning?
  - (1) If yes, how?
  - (2) If no, why not?
  - (3) In what ways does student assessment have a positive effect?
  - (4) In what ways does student assessment have a negative effect?
- B. By focusing attention on all students, has California's accountability system resulted in improved student achievement, particularly in low-performing schools?
- C. What effect is the emphasis on testing for basic skills acquisition having on high-level learning/thinking, and the development of noncognitive skills (i.e. reliability, integrity, working well with others, etc.)?
- D. Are rewards and sanctions currently tied to student test scores effectively motivating educators to improve academic outcomes?
- E. Are schools that serve the urban and rural poor receiving sufficient additional resources and assistance needed to improve student outcomes?
- F. Are lower-performing schools receiving sufficient additional resources, assistance, and time to work with low-achieving students as much as needed to improve student outcomes?
- G. Is performance data presented to teachers, schools, and districts in a way that is understandable and usable?
- H. Are teachers, schools, districts, and parents able to use the performance data to effectively support student success?
- I. What roles and responsibilities should be designated to the local districts and sites to improve student achievement in their schools?
- J. Have policy-makers taken the necessary steps to ensure the successful implementation of the High School Exit Exam, targeted for 2006?

#### **5. THE PUBLIC'S ROLE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION**

How can all the institutions and nongovernmental organizations that are concerned about public education in California work together more effectively to improve the quality of education offered to California's students? What role can the LWVC play?

