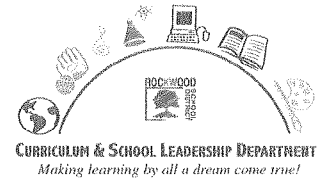


Growing Together,
Learning for Life

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Roxanna Mechem
Director
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March 19, 2010

Thank you for meeting with me and for supporting public education!

In light of the ESEA reauthorization, I wanted to make sure and express a few key ideas that are critical for adequately preparing students for college and career. I also believe that there is an even greater need to prepare American students for a more important role, **citizenship**.

- NLCB had the unintended consequence of narrowing the curriculum. **Schools across the country have stopped regular instruction in social studies, especially in the early grades.** This is a problem because students are being taught to read, but are not being taught now to make sense of what they read or how to have informed dialogue and debate.
- ESEA amendments should make increased competitive funding available to improve instruction in the social studies areas.
- Common core standards efforts currently address English language arts and math, and will eventually address science. Federal investment in assessments and **accountability measures should include assessments in social studies areas** so that educators have access to data about how we are doing in our quest to educate informed citizens.
- **Public schools were founded with a civic mission, and citizenship has been a number one priority.** This mission is in danger of being lost unless professional development and accountability measures make clear the link between civic education and college and career readiness. Currently authorized investments in teacher professional development such as Title II of ESEA, Teaching American History Grants, Civic Education, National History Day, and Excellence in Economic Education help accomplish these goals. Federal investments are more important than ever as states are cutting budgets and look to federal priorities to determine how to trim. Social studies, if not prioritized, may continue to face difficulties in the current economic landscape.
- I have experienced first hand the difference that the Teaching American History Grants and the Civic Education grants are making. I've worked with teachers and students in both the United States and Morocco who are now teaching students how to identify a public policy issue, research and develop a plan to improve the situation, and implement the plan for the betterment of their community. Students and teachers never look at education the same when they understand **real world application** of the content and skills they are learning.
- The social studies disciplines are in the best place to help students develop civic literacy, global awareness, economic literacy, geographic literacy, and the critical thinking skills that students need to compete in the 21st century. Learning to grapple with historical and contemporary issues help prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. **Students need a rich background in the social studies in order to effectively make sense of the world around them.**
- The proposed ESEA idea of separating districts into three categories and recognizing high performing districts will serve the Rockwood School District well. We would always strive to be in the top category of districts. The practices of top districts need to be shared, emulated and pushed forward. While the discussion of helping failing districts is needed and admirable, the quality of American Education and what it is able to accomplish for our country rests as much with the top 25% of districts. ESEA must also fund and encourage innovation and success to drive the best schools toward continuous improvement that takes into account the individual needs of **all** students.

Sincerely,

Roxanna Mechem, Ed. S.
Director of Assessment and School Climate, Rockwood School District
National Council for the Social Studies, Board of Directors