

# *Asora<sup>®</sup> Education Enterprises*

## **Education Reform Ala Trump**

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Unlike presidential transfers of power in recent decades, where the changes in U.S. education policy were rather minor, the transition from the Obama administration to the new Trump administration will bring about significant changes in education policy through a relaxation of the various federal edicts and other forms of interference with the operations of our K-12 schools, public and private. Moreover, it will redirect some of its grants to the states.

The gist of Donald Trump's vision on the federal roles in K-12 education can be expressed in two words: Choice and devolution:

**Choice:** Giving parents much more say in the choice of schools, either public or private, would be accomplished by redirecting approximately \$20 billion federal dollars in grants to the states for various kinds of choice programs including vouchers and charter schools.

**Devolution:** The imposition of curricula on the states through the Common Core State Standards requirements will end, as will many other regulations coming from Washington that should be the responsibility of state education officials.

Changes in these two areas means that education reform can be accomplished more at the state level than from the federal level. This means that 51 states and the District of Columbia can each devise their own reforms. These many "laboratories" of education reform can compete among themselves and among the corresponding successes and failures much can be learned and copied by other states in their efforts to improve K-12 education.

### ***On Choice***

Candidate Trump presented his proposals on school choice in a campaign speech he gave in Cleveland, Ohio on September 8<sup>th</sup> this year. His plan would not follow the usual practice of awarding federal grants on a per pupil basis. Rather he would provide larger grants (per pupil) to those "states that have private school choice, magnet schools and charter laws." Awarding such grants in this preferential manner would presumably motivate states not having these kinds of choice programs to consider establishing them. The total funds for school choice would represent an enormous increase nationally from about \$2 billion per year to ten times that at \$20 billion per year.

He would apply what one might call moral pressure on the states to enlarge their choice programs to meet the goal of providing all economically disadvantaged children a choice of a public, private or religious school for their educational development. For that purpose, he suggested that if the states "collectively contribute another \$110 billion of their own budgets toward school choice" the result would be 65 times the current level of funding for vouchers and other school choice vehicles. The late Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen would have called that kind of funding "real money!"

In Cleveland Mr. Trump said, "As your President, I will be the nation's biggest cheerleader for school choice."

### ***On Devolution***

Earlier this year, Donald Trump tweeted, "I have been consistent in my opposition to Common Core. Get rid of Common Core." Without too much elaboration, we can say that Common Core was coerced on the states through the Race to the Top program of the Obama administration.♣ That specific coercion is now gone because of the new legislation, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), that has replaced its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), under which Race to the Top was imposed by regulation. The Trump administration will have sufficient flexibility under the terms of ESSA to write regulations that will either be neutral towards Common Core or that could provide disincentives to its use. The bottom line of his approach is that states will have the freedom on their own to use whatever academic standards they like. It is probably not necessary to prohibit Common Core because it will probably wither on the vine- based on accumulating evidence about its very limited utility and popularity.

At this time it is not clear to what extent the forthcoming Trump administration and next Congress will want to reduce the federal role in education. Some argue that the Education Department could be closed by Executive order without any act of Congress. This claim is based on the argument that the Department's very existence is contrary to the Constitution's 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Such a move might not be very popular politically even if legally correct.

Also, new instructional methods and technologies are much less expensive to use than traditional means of educating children in our K-12 schools. Asora's Stellar Schools business plan takes advantage of these economies and we think other school operators will also move in this direction. We would imagine that the Trump education policy will advocate innovations of this sort as well.

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\* A detailed examination of Common Core issues is in a recent Asora Education report, *Overcoming Common Core With Honest Academic Standards*, that can be accessed on our website at: <http://asoraeducation.com/page35/page35.html>