Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VIII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

3. Define the major benefits and drawbacks of Federalism.
4. Analyze the differences between liberal and conservative ideology in the states.
5. Assess how major policy responsibilities vary among different state and local governments, to include economics, immigration, and civil liberties.
6. Summarize the methods and processes of changing state laws or constitutions.
7. Contrast the varied systems of government and bureaucracy found among the state and local levels.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 16:
The Politics of Education

Chapter 17:
The Politics of Poverty, Welfare, and Health

In order to access the resource below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the Academic Search Complete database within the CSU Online Library.


Unit Lesson

“If you think education is expensive, you should try ignorance” (Dye & MacManus, 2015, p 461). In early times, only very wealthy men and priests learned to read and write. Today in America, there are over 56 million children in school each day. Dye and MacManus (2015) inform, “If the people were to be granted the right of suffrage, they must be educated to the task. This meant that public education had to be universal, free, and compulsory” (p. 460).

During colonial times, education was for the purpose of teaching children to read the Bible. The Bay Psalm Book is what was used to teach children. It taught the Calvinist idea, along with teaching the alphabet, “F”—the idol fool is whipped at school and “A”—in Adams fall, we sin all.

Today, schools must do more than just teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. Schools must teach racial equality, bolster children’s images of themselves, teach manners, proper dress, proper speech, not to do drugs or drink, how to get and hopefully keep a job, sex education, in many instances parenting skills, and basically be a student’s parent from 7:00am to 3:00pm or even 5:00pm, five days a week. Teachers must do all of this, plus prepare students in history, government, science, math, language arts, and various other topics chosen by the states in order for students to graduate.
A school system’s performance is measured on a variety of items. Some of those include dropout rates and standardized testing scores. There are three ways to measure the dropout rate of a school system: event dropouts, status dropouts, and high school graduation rates. Most schools use the High School Graduation Rate, which is the number of students that started ninth grade and look at how many of them cross the stage on time four years later. Some school systems are striving for 100% graduation and push it so strenuously that many students are given the idea that they will graduate no matter how little they put into their education. The 1983 report, “A Nation at Risk,” put out by the Commission on Excellence in Education recommended, “standardized tests for promotion and graduation” (Dye & MacManus, 2015, p. 464). With this recommendation, more and more states began to implement standardized tests in third through twelfth grades at various times during the year. States such as Texas implemented the TAKS test (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills), which is given to seniors and those who do not pass, do not get to graduate, even if they have passed all of their classes and have all of their credits.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind) has been in effect since 2001. This education reform act relies heavily upon testing, and “states to establish standards in reading and mathematics and annually test all students in grades three through eight” (Dye & MacManus, 2015, p. 472). The goal is to make sure that every child is reading before they get to the fourth grade. Schools are rated by these tests on adequate yearly progress (AYP). If a school fails to make progress several years in a row, then they can be taken over and either closed with all students being sent to other schools, or all administration and teachers fired and new ones brought in. In the last couple of years, several states have received waivers out of NCLB.

President Obama has also taken his turn at education reform in what he calls “Race to the Top.” In this program, states compete for federal money but must take certain actions in order to get it. Some of the actions include tying teacher pay to test scores, adopting international benchmark standards, building data systems, and allowing charter schools. This is another case in a long line of carrot and stick programs the federal government has implemented over the years.

While the original schools were organized to teach children so that they could read their Bible, religion has been pushed out of public education more and more since the 1960s. In the 1962 case of Engle v. Vitale, the Supreme Court stated “making prayer voluntary did not free it from the prohibitions of the No Establishment Clause” (Dye & MacManus, 2015, p. 486). One year later, the court would again rule on religion in schools in Abington Township v. Schempp saying that reading the Bible is considered to be a religious ceremony. Then in 2000, the court would revisit this look at prayer saying, “the delivery of an invocation at public high school football games over the school’s public address system was an unconstitutional state-sponsored endorsement of religion” (Dye & MacManus, 2015, p. 487).

Financing, curriculum, religion, and testing are just some of the fights that go on across the country concerning public education. It seems that everyone wants to reform education, but no one wants to wait and find out if anything works. How will these questions be resolved in the future?

Who is poor in America? There are over 40 million poor people in the U.S. today, and there are billions of dollars spent each year to help this group. Some of the programs implemented include Supplemental Security Income for disabled, Food stamps, Earned Income Tax Credit, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid. There is also Social Security and Medicare to help out those over the age of 65 (although the age limit, tied to life expectancy, keeps moving up).

In 2010, President Obama made the move to implement universal healthcare with his Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which he moved to push through both houses of Congress. Despite this act’s passage, many states sued to get rid of it. After making their way through the court system to the Supreme Court, each of these challenges was turned away by early 2015.

Governing the masses is not easy. Within the United States, the people have a voice, which many do not use. In order to make a change within your communities and protect what you hold dear, you must stand up and be counted. From education to healthcare to where houses and businesses are located, you must take the time to wisely choose those who will speak for you. Participation is the key to community satisfaction.

**Suggested Reading**

If you would like additional information regarding the textbook readings, consider reviewing the below Chapter Presentations:

- Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 16 PowerPoint Presentation entitled “Chapter 16: The Politics of Education.” Click [here](#) for the PDF version.
- Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 17 PowerPoint Presentation entitled “Chapter 17: The Politics of Poverty, Welfare, and Health.” Click [here](#) for the PDF version.

**Learning Activities (Non-Graded)**

Use the CSU Waldorf Online Library to find an article on current education reform. Use a free blog site to create your own blog. Discuss what positive actions are being taken to create reform in the U.S. education system. What issues still need to be addressed?

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.