

The Most Noble Profession

By Reg P. Wydeven
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In 1984, the heavy metal band Van Halen released the song 'Hot For Teacher.' It was a great song with an even greater video. Sixteen years later, I married the woman of my dreams, who also happens to be a teacher. Accordingly, my license plate reads 'HT 4 TCHR.'

Like most teachers I know (and I know a lot!), my wife works a ton of hours and devotes her life to improving her students' learning. While budget cuts have hurt lots of school districts, our teachers are still doing amazing things in the classroom. Many of the innovative and effective educational programs they implement are a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson passed the ESEA as part of his "War on Poverty." The Act was designed to provide equal access to education and authorized federally funded primary and secondary education programs. The funds are used for professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs and parental involvement promotion, such as with PTAs.

The Act was originally authorized through 1970, however, the government has reauthorized the Act every five years since. President Bush signed the current reauthorization of the ESEA, which is known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Senator Ted Kennedy, who sponsored the bill, helped gain overwhelming bipartisan support for it in Congress.

The NCLB implements the theory of standards-based education, which sets high standards and establishes measurable goals to improve individual outcomes in education. The Act requires that states develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools.

Because the ESEA is again up for renewal, President Obama has asserted that his version will be aligned with college-and-career-ready standards. A statement released by the White House claims the new measures will require all states to adopt and certify that they have college-and-career-ready standards in reading, and that schools will be rewarded for producing dramatic gains in student achievement.

President Obama's blueprint provides incentives for states to adopt academic standards that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and create accountability systems that measure student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate and succeed in college.

According to Nicole Hochholzer, a literacy coach at Kaukauna High School and a senior consultant and author for the International Center for Leadership and Education (AND my sister!), educators have historically viewed reading as an issue for the early elementary grades. However, reading is a fundamental skill in the context of college- and career-readiness. She believes that students need to be proficient readers as they move on to a career or postsecondary education. Therefore, teachers need to look at reading as everyone's responsibility throughout the K-12 curriculum.

To achieve President Obama's vision, Nicole feels that it will be necessary to incorporate reading and writing across the curriculum into a systematic approach. Therefore, elementary literacy resource teachers, like my wife, would work hand-in-hand with secondary literacy resource teachers, like my sister, to develop coordinated reading and writing programs for K-12.

Federal funding for education was over \$54 billion in 2007, and will presumably increase this go-around. Combined with our teachers' desire to be actively involved in implementing these goals, I am confident we will meet President Obama's challenge to put America on a path to global leadership.

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