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Federal Policy Recommendations

1 message

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Federal Policy Recommendations

Focus on the traditional federal role—increasing educational equity. (Note that the federal government has three main tools: money, legislation, and research.)

Enforce federal civil rights requirements. These include:

- Federal laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, and age for programs receiving federal funds from the Department of Education. (There is no federal legislation specifically protecting LGBT students. Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, is the main relevant legislation.)
- Federal requirements for the education of students with disabilities and English-language learners.
- The requirement (based on a Supreme Court decision) that children of undocumented immigrants be given a free elementary and secondary education. (Note also the proposals for in-state higher education tuition for children of undocumented immigrants.)

Increase school integration:

- Give school districts incentives to increase integration—for example, by establishing cross-district magnet schools. (See Thurgood Marshall's dissent in the Supreme Court decision against requiring cross-district desegregation.)
- Avoid incentives for policies that contribute to increased school segregation—for example, charter schools.

Discontinue policies that have been shown to have significant adverse consequences:

- Test-based accountability is a prime example. (See recent book by Dan Koretz.)

Increase resources for low-income schools and students:

- Increase funding for Title I, which provides additional resources for low-income elementary and secondary schools. (See Thurgood Marshall's dissent in the Supreme Court decision against requiring federal involvement in equalizing school funding. Note also large differences in school funding across states, within states, and within districts.)
- Provide large increases in Pell Grants for higher education. (Also note problem of polarization of higher education in context of proposals for free community colleges.)

Focus on the underlying social problems:

- Family and school poverty are the major problems contributing to the achievement gap and it is these problems the federal government needs to address in order to make a significant difference in educational outcomes. The focus should be on employment, housing, and health programs; tax policy; the increasing income gap; access to higher education; civil rights protections; and integrated communities and schools. The United States has changed enormously—and for the better—in the past 60 years with the increased access of minorities to higher education, to the labor market, to integrated neighborhoods, and to substantial participation in the nation's political and civic life. (See, for example, the Supreme Court decision on location of public housing—"disparate impact" and David Berliner's article.)

The various debates during the Colorado governor's race are irrelevant in this context. In fact, the candidates' platforms were very similar—generally fine suggestions although unrealistic that all could be accomplished. Johnson's previous views about testing and charter schools are not pertinent now.

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