

Recommendations for Action

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The authors offer a wide array of suggestions for ensuring that every child receives a solid liberal education. Here we recap their recommendations under four broad headings: Standards, Assessments, and Curriculum; Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Compensation; Choice and Innovation; and Public Engagement.

We also suggest which sector we judge is best suited to implement these ideas: the Federal government (F), state government (S), local governments (L), or the private sector (P). And we've cross-referenced each recommendation back to the page on which it originally appears.

Note, please, that these suggestions represent the views of individual authors, not necessarily those of other contributors or the staff or trustees of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Standards, Assessments, and Curriculum

- **Establish High-quality Standards across the Liberal Arts Fields**
 - Create K-12 academic standards that provide criteria by which to cultivate sophisticated reasoning abilities as students study history, culture, etc., while leaving room for individual schools and educators to interpret and apply them (F/S). pp. 24, 131.
 - Teach students reading and math skills through substantive liberal arts topics. For example, revamp English readings to focus on historical, philosophical, and civic concerns; tie math problems to scientific and economic issues. (S/L). pp. 20, 37, 115.
- **Administer Assessments in Liberal Arts Subjects**
 - Redefine "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) in NCLB and require students to take and pass tests in liberal disciplines, such as history (F/S). p. 54.
- **Provide Strong Curricular Materials**
 - Distribute and encourage districts to use the liberal-arts materials that have been developed by (inter alia) the national endowments for the Humanities and the Arts. (F). p. 115.
 - Specify chronologically how cumulative learning should proceed within and across grade levels (F/S). p. 115.

- Provide teachers with examples of fully developed lesson plans (F/S). p. 115.
- **Ensure Adequate Instructional Time for the Liberal Arts**
 - Specify the amount of instructional time that students must actually receive in school rather than (or in addition to) the length of the school day (S). p. 87.
 - Carefully monitor the time that schools devote to liberal-arts subjects to see if it matches state objectives (S). p. 71.

Teacher Education, Professional Development & Compensation

- **Strengthen Teacher Preparation**
 - Standardize the core content that all would-be teachers are required to know, making certain to include the liberal arts, and reshape certification requirements accordingly. (S). pp. 73, 102, 114, 121.
 - Increase joint efforts by arts-and-sciences faculty and education faculty to ensure that would-be teachers receive more instruction in content that's well suited to what they will be teaching. (S). p. 122.
 - Expose would-be teachers to the results of international assessments and the conclusions that can be reasonably drawn from them (e.g., American high school students are exposed to too many topics in too short a time span to allow them to grasp basic concepts). (F/S). p. 123.
- **Rethink Professional Development**
 - Revise the criteria for renewing teaching licenses so that K-12 instructors take discipline-centered graduate courses (S). pp. 101-102.
 - Weight the credit that teachers receive for professional development courses so that content-specific seminars earn more credits than those focused on pedagogy or policy (S/L). p. 99.
 - Provide funds for professional development courses focused more on content than on process. (F). p. 115.
 - Offer free seminars in liberal-arts fields so that teachers can easily pursue advanced workshops in their teaching areas (F/S). p. 101.
 - Allow middle and high school teachers to receive professional development credits for courses taken in related subjects. (Biologists should get credit for chemistry courses, for example, and historians for courses in political theory.) (S/L) p. 102.

- Encourage university professors and doctoral students in liberal arts disciplines to work with K-12 teachers by revising the "public outreach" requirements of graduate school grants (F/S). p. 102.
- Fund summer externships for teachers to engage in scholarly research related to their teaching field (F/S/L/P). p. 102.
- **Revamp Teacher Compensation Systems**
 - Reset salary schedules so that teachers with content-specific M.A. degrees are compensated more favorably than those with education degrees (S/L). p. 99.

Choice & Innovation

- **Instill a Passion in Students for Liberal Arts**
 - Fund extracurricular activities in music, visual art, dance, theatre, etc. (F/S/L/P) p. 115.
- **Widen Options within Public Education**
 - Increase the number of charter schools and the amount of other options available so that individual schools can flexibly pursue different approaches to liberal education as part of an "autonomy-in-return-for-accountability" model (S/L) p. 130.
- **Make Imaginative Use of Virtual Education**
 - Revise regulations governing instructional time to allow students to fulfill these hours virtually—and make available more online courses to supplement school-based instruction (F/S). p. 144.
 - Encourage the development of hybrid schools (combining brick and mortar schools and virtual learning) as well as full-time virtual schools (F/S). p. 144.

Public Engagement

- **Educate the Public**
 - Fund and publicize research on how a liberal arts education helps create good citizens, fosters prosperity and strengthens the culture (F/S/P). pp. 143-44.
- **Create a Network of Liberal Educators**
 - To fill the vacuum left by the Council for Basic Education, create a new umbrella organization to give liberal educators opportunities to share ideas and advocate sound policies (F/S/L/P). p. 40.