

2017-19 LOCAL EDUCATION STUDY

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The Education Study Committee completed their two-year study work and the final document was sent to the Board for approval. Between the multiple revisions adding new topics in an earlier study document, the recommendations from Lively Issues on January 2017, and the increasing complexity of topics being added to education such as school safety and nutrition, the committee needed to completely rework the study document. Several topics were added to the study and some previous topics are included in broader topics. There was also some collaboration with the Social Justice study to put topics in the most appropriate study. The committee purposely didn't include such topics like vouchers because it was felt it needed a study of its own.

EDUCATION (1983 and 1993, revised 2006 and 2019)

A. Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Diversity enriches our schools and is an invaluable asset in preparing all students to succeed in an increasingly complex and globally interconnected society. With a diverse student population, equitable practices are essential in providing all students the opportunity to achieve their potential regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, or ability. Educational equity implies that resources may be provided equitably rather than equally in order to adequately meet the needs of all students. The League of Women Voters of Appleton supports addressing educational equity in the following areas:

1. Adequate administrative and support staff to meet specific needs of all students
2. Ongoing staff development to increase awareness of biases and promote culturally and linguistically sensitive practices
3. Initiatives to close achievement and opportunity gaps
4. Continuous examination of curriculum and materials to reduce cultural bias
5. Outreach to diverse communities to increase school-parent involvement
6. Ongoing efforts to provide equity in all co-curricular and scholarship opportunities
7. Subsidies or fee waivers to provide equal access to all appropriate programs district-wide

B. Curriculum

The primary purpose of public schools is to create literate and productive members of a democratic society. The curriculum should foster a positive learning environment for all students that promotes curiosity, initiative, individual responsibility, process thinking, and cooperative learning. It should embrace the whole person to encourage lifelong learning. To further these goals, the LWV of Appleton supports the following:

1. Base curriculum on a set of state and local standards with input from assessments that indicate proficiency levels necessary to achieve a high school diploma to include:
 - a. Basic skills: writing, reading, oral communication, computation, and technology
 - b. Problem-solving skills: research, analysis, and interpretation
 - c. Liberal arts, humanities, fine arts, social and natural sciences, world languages, financial and life skills, and healthy lifestyles
 - d. Comprehension of the political process, interpersonal skills, managing social relationships, team building, and leadership
 - e. K-12 career education planning along with activities and experiences both in and outside the classroom to provide practical, real-life applications of the curriculum
 - f. Human growth and development curriculum with the following parameters:
 - 1) Materials should be available for parental review
 - 2) The program should be required, but parents should have the option to remove their child from portions of the program (See also Youth Advocacy 2018/19)
 - g. Provide support for all areas of the curriculum with a well-equipped and an adequately staffed library/media center
2. Assessment should be student centered and purposeful; it should inform and empower teachers and students to understand and improve their performance as well as inform decision-making for appropriate adaptations to curricula for students in need of differentiation, remediation, or acceleration. Assessment should be frequent enough to provide for continuous improvement but not so often that it disrupts the continuity of the instruction.

C. Class size

The student / teacher ratio in a classroom changes over time as districts realign their focus to current trends. There is no state law that establishes a student / teacher ratio, allowing districts to make that determination. Since student populations vary in districts and schools, the LWV of Appleton supports the following criteria to determine student / teacher ratios.

1. Primary consideration should be in the best interest of the students.
 - a. Socio-economic status of the student population
 - b. The age of students with priority given to a lower student / teacher ratio in the primary grades
2. Class size should not be increased for fiscal reasons.

D. Differentiated programming

Provide programming, including district-affiliated alternatives, to serve the entire spectrum of student needs and aptitudes, from students with disabilities (special education) to students with exceptional needs (gifted education). (Reference Special Education. and Wisconsin Statute 121.02(1)(t).) Open enrollment should be available to all and comparable educational opportunities should be offered at all schools.

E. Early childhood learning

The first five years of a child's life is a critical time for cognitive, social, and emotional development, and greatly impacts future success or failure in life. The LWV of Appleton supports the following:

1. High quality early childhood education programs that involve child development, physical and mental health, and nutrition, as well as access to other supportive services and parent education
2. Developmental screenings for children ages 3 to 5 to evaluate overall development and determine if the child may need additional testing or services before entering kindergarten
3. Early intervention services for families with children ages 3 to 5 who show delays in development
4. Good quality, licensed, affordable childcare through a variety of venues, including on-site work facilities.
 - a) Provide continuing education for childcare providers. Teach safety rules and appropriate behavior.
 - b) Provide a clearing-house for childcare information and education materials, including equipment-loan programs, to encourage better facilities and better-informed childcare providers.

F. Mental and behavioral health

Districts need to provide a comprehensive mental health program including training for staff. School counselors should be available to every student at all levels to help students develop a sense of self-worth and grow academically and socially. Counselors should also provide career education. The LWV of Appleton supports the following:

1. Training for all employees in the following areas
 - a) trauma-informed care
 - b) understanding brain development
 - c) detecting early warning signs of mental illness
 - d) how to link with school-based mental health services and specialty therapists as well as community-based services
 - e) bullying detection, prevention, and intervention
2. Adequate funding for both social workers and specialty therapists in schools
3. Emotional wellness screening beginning in the elementary years
4. Collaborative programs such as NAMI Parents & Teachers as Allies,) NEW Mental Health Connections (help with Sources of Strength or SOS, a high school suicide prevention program, and PATH (Providing Access to Healing), a counseling program sponsored by the United Way.

G. Nutrition

All students should have access to nutritious food and beverages that ensures that they are ready to learn and stay focused throughout the school day. The LWV of Appleton supports the following guidelines:

1. Schools need to teach nutrition and how it enhances student learning. This instruction should begin early in the elementary grades. Schools should integrate nutritional themes into daily lessons and school-wide activities. Parents can be included through handouts, website postings, and presentations.
2. For breakfast, lunch, and snacks, school districts need to offer nutritious food that include a wide variety of fruits and vegetables containing reduced added sugars, sodium, and fats in "right-sized" portions.
3. Student access to this food should not be limited by family income; schools in low-income areas that qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision should enroll in this program that enables schools to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students.
4. Students are more likely to eat breakfast and snacks when they are hungry. Options to provide food in the morning should be age-appropriate.

5. Food and beverage items sold by student organizations or co-curricular activities should comply with school nutritional standards.
- H. Teaching and administrative quality
The LWV of Appleton supports the following to ensure school staff are of the highest quality:
1. Salaries competitive with other comparable northeast Wisconsin schools with the possibility of bonuses or other incentives for specific areas in which personnel are in short supply.
 2. Teaching staff certified in the grade levels and subject areas to which they are assigned
 3. An interview process that includes principals, teachers, and when appropriate, representatives of specialized areas
 4. Effective and relevant professional development grounded in a current educator effectiveness model offered at both the school and district level
 5. On-going professional development plans with compensation for teachers
 6. A mentoring program for new teachers during the first three years of their employment with mentor training and compensation
 7. A formal system of assessment and evaluation of teachers by principals, and when appropriate, representatives of specialized areas, with new teachers evaluated each year during their first three years of employment.
 8. A formal system of assessment and evaluation of administrators grounded in current administrative leadership models
 9. Substitute teachers should have a valid DPI-issued teaching license and be offered staff development opportunities.
- I. Instructional space and organization
1. Instructional space
School districts need to provide facilities that enable staff and students to achieve instructional goals. These facilities must meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Sites and facilities must be maintained. School districts can meet space needs through a variety of means including remodeling underutilized space, renting space in private facilities, and exploring possible donated space through community partners. The LWV of Appleton supports the following:
 - a) Instructional space and equipment (e.g. science and instructional technology) should be periodically assessed.
 - b) Maintenance schedules for capital improvements should be developed.
 - c) Future student enrollment and program growth should be forecast in order to plan for and meet changing needs. Projecting student program growth enables planning for teacher work and office space in areas like special education, English language learners, etc.
 - d) To achieve equity, school districts should consider a weighted student funding model that provides greater resources to students with special and exceptional needs.
 2. School boundaries
School attendance areas sometimes need to be revised in order to balance enrollment equitably throughout the district. The LWV of Appleton supports the following considerations regarding school boundary changes:
 - a) Traffic and geographic concerns
 - b) Equalizing school demographics
 - c) School safety
 - d) Continuity to allow students to start and finish at the same school
- J. School safety
The primary goal of a school district is to provide a safe and secure environment on all campuses for all students, staff, and visitors while simultaneously maintaining a welcoming and engaging learning environment. The LWV of Appleton supports the following:
1. Maintain collaborative relationships with local police departments.
 2. Other than for law enforcement personnel, no other weapons should be allowed on campuses.
 3. Reasonable safety precautions should encompass the buildings as well as outer perimeters of the campus.
 4. In order to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, the LWV of Appleton supports the recommendations of the National Association of School Nurses.