



Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

“The Practioner’s Best Friend”
www.wsascd.org

‘Critical Questions’ Series March 2007

SHOULD EDUCATORS BE POLITICALLY ACTIVE?

As educators, we are sometimes put in an uncomfortable position about our political leanings. We must not use our position of authority to influence students’ political persuasions or to interfere with their family’s political values. Yet, as public educators, significant parts of our careers are dictated by the political winds. Whether from curriculum standards to assessment practices or from health care and salaries to school safety, political debate and decision-making touch all of us in critical ways. Although we may not be in a position to discuss these things in our schools and classrooms, outside of that it can be a crucial responsibility for us to educate politicians and policy makers if political decisions are to be accurately informed and beneficial for our students, our schools, our community, and our profession.

The internationally renowned literacy educator and author, Regie Routmann, has written about the “teacher as political activist” and states, “As political activists, we must be advocates and risk takers who are willing to write and speak publicly. We must be public relations people who testify, write letters, pen editorials, and communicate clearly with all educational stakeholders.” Further, “We teachers must be brave, informed, and outspoken. And we need to be heroes – ordinary people who take risks for what we strongly believe in and hold dear.” (*Conversations*, 2000 pg. 6).

Right now, our Washington State legislature is in session discussing and making decisions regarding education that will ultimately affect all of us educators as well as the future of our students and communities. You can become informed of what is happening on a weekly basis by going to the Washington Association of School Administrators’ “This Week in Olympia” website at <http://www.wasa-oly.org/governme/twio.htm>.

In addition to state awareness and involvement, you can become an even more active participant in ASCD by signing up for free to be an ASCD Educator Advocate. As an advocate you will receive updates on what is

happening politically in Washington D.C. as well as in schools and districts around the country. Simply go to <http://www.edadvocates@ascd.org> and sign up to take further advantage of being a WSASCD member by joining the growing group of politically aware and active ASCD Educator Advocates. Here's to contributing to informed political and policy decisions that will strengthen our profession and the futures of our students.

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