

Some questions to consider related to children and their education . . .

for candidates and for discussion and reflection

Dear Friends,

On January 14th, 2004, the National Education Association and the National Council of Churches hosted an Interfaith Roundtable. This historic meeting provided religious leaders and educators the opportunity to reflect together on the relationship of faith communities to public schools and the way we can work together, guided by the United States Constitution, to support our schools and those who work and learn within them. At this event, the Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the NCCC, made this important observation:

"I believe in the separation of church and state, but not in the separation of people of faith from institutions of government."

As we approach the fall elections, the NCCC Committee on Public Education crafted the following questions for your consideration and reflection. The first set of questions is general in nature and intended for personal reflection and perhaps as a catalyst for discussion in a small group or other adult education setting. The second set of questions is intended to be addressed to candidates.

We realize that people of faith interpret their faith in different ways and do not always agree on political issues and concerns. Through these questions we invite you to consider how you can express your Christian concern for children and schools as you are engaged in your civic responsibility to vote this fall.

*The National Council of Churches
Committee on Public Education and Literacy*



National Council of Churches – Committee on Public Education & Literacy

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Questions for reflection and discussion

General questions for small groups and personal reflection:

1. What role does my understanding of the gospel play in my public life, in particular my participation in the electoral process?
2. How does my vote reflect Jesus' mandate to love the neighbor?
3. What are the issues in this campaign that touch the lives of those Jesus calls 'the least of these,' those who are poor, vulnerable, and whose voice is not always heard?

Questions related to public education:

1. Do you think people understand civic responsibility differently than they did a generation ago? two generations ago?
2. What is the role of universal, compulsory education in a democracy?
3. How do you judge the relative importance of public education as a function of government?
4. What is the role of taxes to enable government at all levels to provide public services such as schools?

Specific questions for candidates

1. How do you think states and school districts can be helped to pay for the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act that are aimed at raising expectations and closing achievement gaps?
2. We live in a country where society spends the least on the education of children whose families are the poorest. What steps must we take to make sure children who face every disadvantage can achieve at the levels of wealthier children?
3. Do you think standardized tests produce higher achievement? If so, would you tell us how?
4. We expect teachers to change lives and accomplish miracles. What specific resources and supports do teachers need to accomplish what our society expects?
5. We have many cities in this country where children remain highly segregated by race and poverty. What are steps our federal and state governments should take to address racial and economic isolation?

