

## ABSTRACT

Victoria J. Dodd

*A Critique of the Bush Education Proposal*

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Abstract by Stephen R. Stone

In her article, *A Critique of the Bush Education Proposal*, Victoria J. Dodd analyzes President George W. Bush's federal education proposal. The article begins with an examination of the proposed education funding, arguing that the current federal expenditure is too low. The criticism is based on several factors including: the relatively low percentage of the U.S. budget spent on education as compared to other nations; the imbalance in resource allocation that favors universities over primary and secondary schools; and the shrinking state coffers due to the recent economic slowdown. The author suggests the federal government may be the only economically viable party to supply the needed resources. The benefits from additional federal expenditures would include smaller classes, increased funding for after school extra-curricular activities, and additional funding for the Head Start Program.

The author gives limited praise to President Bush's proposal to develop assessment tests to evaluate the effectiveness of public schools. One flaw of the proposal is allowing states to develop their own standards, thereby precluding interstate comparison. The author also argues that to the extent that similar tests have already been adopted by states, the new requirements may be redundant. Finally, there is the added danger that teachers may begin to "teach to the tests." The sharpest criticism of President Bush's education plan is focussed on his voucher plan. This plan proposes to allow students within schools failing to meet academic standards, and failing to improve, to receive federal aid in the form of a voucher to transfer to a higher performing school or obtain tutoring. The author criticizes the voucher program on a number of policy and constitutional grounds.

After considering these aspects of President Bush's proposal, the author suggests the Supreme Court should overrule its decision in *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, in which the Court held that there is no constitutional fundamental right to public education. Among the arguments in favor of this approach are the historical views of the Framers of the Constitution, expounding the necessity and importance of public education, and Supreme Court precedents, holding public schooling is a fundamental right. The article concludes that the President Bush's proposal is not in line with the history, tradition, and values of our country, and it does not provide enough federal funding for public schools to ensure that "no child will be left behind."