

## **Seeking Civic Virtue Two Views of the Philosophy and History of Federalism in U.S. Education**

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### **Abstract**

The controversy centering around the role of the national government in education poses a philosophical question that this paper seeks to answer: Is it just to leave the function of education to individual states? Using a classical philosophical approach drawing on the ideas from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, I will attempt to investigate this question further. I use Aristotle because his ideas indirectly influenced the American founding. It is possible to see elements of Aristotle throughout the federalist papers, many of which were written by James Madison—the architect of the Constitution. I will then counter this approach with the ideas of philosopher Amy Gutmann, using her democratic approach to education in society. While Aristotle and republicanism are an essential part of the American legal system, democracy is also a basic building block to the body politic, and both offer ways to tackle this philosophical question about control of education. After exploring this philosophical question, I will then investigate the history of federalism in education by looking at historical trends of federal involvement in education, and what the traditional role of states has been since the founding of the United States.

### **Introduction**

The Tenth Amendment to the *United States Constitution* states, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor pro-

hibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” This leaves the power to create schools and a system for education in the hands of individual states, rather than the central federal government. The historical and philosophical term used to describe a government that shares power between a central and regional governments is called federalism. Today, all fifty states provide public schooling to their young people. This leaves fifty approaches to education within the borders of one nation. Some might argue that this system should be streamlined by the federal government to ensure equality for every student in every state of the same nation. Conversely, many believe that the central government should stay out of education. President Ronald Reagan campaigned for the abolition of the Department of Education during his run for president (Clabaugh, 2004). In fact, a bill was recently introduced in the House of Representatives that would abolish the Department of Education effective December 31, 2018 (Kamenetz, 2017). Despite the desire by some to abolish the federal Department of Education, there are many tasks and responsibilities for which this federal agency is responsible. Some of these tasks include funding for special education, ensuring civil rights for students, providing funding to those with low income, technology grants, food guidelines, school lunch programs, and suggested academic standards for states to implement. The controversy centering around the role of the federal government in education poses a philosophical question that this paper seeks to answer: Is it just to leave the function of education to individual states? Using a classical philosophical approach drawing on the ideas from Aristotle’s (2009) *Nicomachean Ethics* (Ethics), I will attempt to investigate this question further. I use Aristotle because his ideas indirectly influenced the American founding. It is possible to see elements of Aristotle throughout the *Federalist Papers*, many of which were written by James Madison—the architect of the Constitution. I will then counter this approach with the ideas of philosopher Amy Gutmann, using her democratic approach to education in society. While Aristotle and republicanism are an essential part of the American legal system, democracy is also a basic building block to the body politic, and both offer ways to tackle this philosophical question about control of education. After exploring this philosophical question, I will then investigate the history of federalism in education by looking at historical trends of federal involvement in education, and what the traditional role of states has been since the founding of the United States.

### ***Classical Approach***

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (2009) contends that every person is in search of what is called the good life, also translated as hap-

pinness. In Greek, this is called *eudaimonia*. The good life, called *telos* in Greek, is an end to what people seek in life. *Telos* is not to be confused with desire or wants but is a mean or average of a collection of virtues that one can possess. When individuals find a perfect balance in their lives they reach this 'mean.' To understand the importance of attaining virtue, it is first necessary to understand the way in which individuals learn to be virtuous. To Aristotle, this takes place within a community. The community is the place where people engage in friendship, which to Aristotle is a form of justice. Justice is synonymous to living a virtuous life. As members of a community, or polis, it is incumbent upon people to be virtuous and make their community a place where virtue can thrive. According to Aristotle (1948), the polis was formed around families, who then create villages, and villages together form a polis. This is important because he believed that community was needed in order to have a good life. It is from this community that members derive their virtue.

What is virtue? Aristotle uses the term *arete* to describe virtue, which Taylor (2006) translates as excellence. This type of virtue is two-fold for Aristotle, one type is excellence of intellect and the other is excellence of character (Taylor, 2006). In Book Two, Chapter One of *Ethics*, Aristotle (2009) wrote that virtue of intellect is learned from teaching, and that virtue of character is learned from habit. These virtues are not natural to people and must be learned; however, it is not possible to learn them just from desire to do so. Hence, one must live in a community, and learn these virtues over time. Aristotle explains this by writing:

We acquire the virtues by having previously exercised them, as also in the case of the skills. For what one has to learn to do we learn by doing, e.g. people become builders by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre; and so too we become just by performing just acts and temperate by temperate acts and courageous by courageous acts. (Warne, 2006, p. 2)

Virtues, however, are not learned like playing the lyre; rather they are inculcated over time by exposure within a community, and by habitual practice.

Citizenship is at the heart of much of Aristotle's work, and the role of the citizen in *Politics* is someone who literally rules and helps make laws, which is a role reserved for a certain class of person. Yet, in the United States, all citizens rule by virtue of voting. While these ideas are quite different, it is important to understand that the framers of American Constitutionalism intended for sovereignty to be placed with the people; which were white male landowners, but has evolved over time to make all people citizens. One common place to find the conception

of democracy in the United States is in *Federalist Ten*, in which James Madison explains that a republic is where “the scheme of representation takes place” (Madison, 1985, p.1). This type of representation stands in stark contrast to direct or pure democracy, which the founders tried to avoid and is evident in institutions like the Electoral College, the United States Senate, and the small number of congressional representatives which dilute the power of the people and are largely undemocratic (Wolin, 1960). Wolin (1960) argued that Madison was influenced by the idea that ambition and interest of those that wish to serve as representatives could influence them to be more virtuous, which is an idea espoused by Machiavelli. Despite the disparate republican form of government found in the United States, it does carry elements of democracy, albeit representative. Aristotle wrote in the *Politics*: “the excellence of being a good citizen must belong to all citizens indifferently, because that is a condition necessary for the state being the best state” (Barker, 1948, p. 117). This recognition that virtue or excellence is necessary for each citizen and person is of great importance, as it recognizes that all people are diverse and yet they all must still adhere to the doctrine of the mean that is proposed in search of a virtuous life. Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean is balance between extreme emotions, actions, and feelings of the human condition. It is similar to the ego within Freud’s psychoanalysis between the id and superego. When citizens of a polis come together and live virtuously, while ruling justly, the good life is attainable. Citizens acting virtuously together will make the good life achievable for all.

Within the context of education, the United States is made up of a collection of villages, townships, counties, and other local government entities. Local school boards have traditionally controlled the schooling/education systems for localities, and each school board has power and control to make independent decisions as to what they feel is best for the children in their community. Individual communities have different needs, and every citizen of each community can vote for their school board members which represent the polis of each village. Schooling and education from the perspective of virtue ethics posited by Aristotle would best be served by the local community. It is within the local community that people learn from one another and witness virtue with the hope of obtaining this as their telos toward the goal of eudaimonia. Situated within a community, individuals find friendship, and within relationships between friends, virtue is found. Aristotle wrote,

Between friends, there is no need for justice, but people who are just, still need the quality of friendship; and indeed friendliness is considered to be justice in the fullest sense. It is not only a necessary thing but a splendid one. (Aristotle, 2009, p. 35)

To Aristotle, justice and friendship are both essential parts of living the good life and are intertwined. Standards for education that were created and suggested by the federal government or even state governments have recently become rigid statements that describe specific pieces of information that students and teachers are responsible for memorizing or learning (Ravitch, 2010). This type of curriculum, or goal for learning, runs counter to the beliefs of Aristotle. To Aristotle, interacting with others in the community and creating friendships with other citizens is a step toward reaching a good life, and that “the just in the fullest sense is regarded as constituting an element of friendship” (Barker, 1948, p. 215).

While it is true that Aristotle does not provide specific direction for ways in which to live the good life, he does list the specific virtues needed to reach this end; however, he rejects the notion that these virtues can be taught outright. To Aristotle, there is no reason for young people to study ethics specifically, as they do not have the life experience to understand how ethics work to create the good life (Warne, 2006). Aristotle also rejects the notion that living a virtuous life is something with which people are born. He is clear on multiple occasions through his writing that virtue is a practical product that is acquired through habitual practice (Warne, 2006, p. 38). This type of habitual practice fits well within the federal system of the United States. If the family unit is where the polis begins, and the city is the political construct for which people live and learn to become citizens, then the inculcation of virtue and the happy life are best suited to take place at the local level. Thus, education in an Aristotelian view must take place in the community, as there is no difference between public and private life.

### ***Democratic Perspective***

Philosopher Amy Gutmann, (1987) looks at this philosophical question differently. She argues that the aim of education should coincide with broader democratic aims of the United States. To Gutmann, the term democratic has a dualistic meaning. In a democracy, one must first be ruled before they can rule (Gutmann, 1987). From the time children are born into the world, they are ruled over by their parents or some figure of authority. This remains the case until they reach adulthood, which is when they are granted the voting rights of a citizen. This makes education of paramount importance in the development of future citizens, and a focus should be placed on giving these students a voice in the democracy in which they are situated. Like Aristotle, Gutmann recognized that education is political, as the principles of the polis should be represented within an individual’s upbringing. However, she views national identity

as a concept that must be reckoned with in a democratic society, which gives a role to the central government in education.

Gutmann evaluates the issue of educational control from different perspectives. One perspective is the idea of a “national agenda” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 4). She criticizes the notion that there are not common ideas with which people in the United States can find consensus, and notes that disagreement is a necessary norm in a democracy. These disagreements happen often and can be over large and small issues, which leads her to question the proper role of government in education. This becomes problematic, as it is difficult to define the proper role of government. Should the government be responsible for teaching morality to children? If so, at what level?

Traditional debates about who should have the power to control education come from many perspectives, including conservative theory, liberal theory, social reproduction theory, and the Frankfurt School’s critical theory (Gutmann, 1987). Conservative theory tends to always side with the parents’ right to control their child’s education and what they learn, generally placing the power over education within a locality, or even schooling within the home. Liberal theory seeks to create “individual autonomy” in children and provide equitable education to all students, often leading to a central government providing policy that directs all schools to provide equitable services to all students within the body politic (Gutmann, 1987, p. 8). Structuralists and those who adhere to social reproduction theory view education as a mechanism controlled by a dominant upper class that is used as a way to reproduce economic class systems and hegemonic dominance. Similar to structuralism, Critical Theory analyzes legitimate knowledge in order to reveal their misinterpretations and how it works in the interest of dominant cultures. Gutmann (1987) claims that none of these theories work to actually answer the question as to who should control the government, and this is because they are not political theories that deal with the reality of decision making within a polis. This is why a democratic theory is needed in order to answer the question over control. A democratic approach calls for the body politic to deliberate and discuss these issues in an attempt to reach a consensus for the nation and society, and this is where the “virtue” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 11) of democracy is found, in the legitimacy of all voices within the political realm. Gutmann summarizes this by writing,

A democratic theory of education provides principles that, in the face of our social disagreements, help us judge (a) who should have authority to make decisions about education, and (b) what the moral boundaries of that authority are. (Gutmann, 1987, p.11)

This theory and understanding have a dynamism because of different opinions and voices of change within the polis.

Gutmann (1987) argues about the necessity of a divide that exists between the professional and the democratic within the field of education. This is significant because teachers must have a certain level of professional autonomy in their classroom, which takes power away from a central authority—this works to prevent an individual teacher’s professional drive from ossification. On the other hand, the public must have a say in what they see as important for their children to learn as future citizens and members of the public. This indicated the importance of having some sort of standard for teachers that comes from a central authority. This could presumably in the form of curriculum or teacher standards or even recommendations for education programs of future teachers and administrators.

This division of spheres also exists within the idea of the private and public. Although Aristotle did not recognize a difference between the private and public, Gutmann does. She points out that conservatives believe their children are the sole responsibility of parents and that they have a “natural right” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 116) to control the education of their children. This begs the question as to whether parents should be able to send their children to private schools that teach things that might be counter to the values held by the polis. If this is the case, then a breakdown in national identity and a common democratic goal could be possible. Children are not only the responsibility of parents, but also of the body politic in which they reside. This means that there is a requirement for the national government to implement some sort of goals and ideals that are necessary for all students to obtain in pursuit of individual citizenship in a democratic society. However, a national identity can also be challenged in public schools, as they are controlled locally and by their respective states. This issue can be mitigated through federal law or by states volunteering to integrate national standards, as was attempted in the Common Core Standards movement.

The United States is not a nation-state and does not have a homogenous culture. However, when each state goes about implementing their educational goals, disparity can exist in areas that go against the national dedication to equality. Civil Rights, funding equality, and disability services have been an area that the Federal government has inserted itself in the foray of educational policy. Equality under the law is a fundamental principle of the American Democracy and can be found in both the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution’s* 14th Amendment. Trying to find a balance between how much of a role

the federal government plays, and how much local control schools and states ought to have is not easily answered. Gutmann writes,

Determining the optimal balance between local control and centralized authority over education becomes an issue of enormous complexity. The two simplest solutions are unacceptable. At one extreme, delegating to local school boards full control over public schooling would reduce the United States to a collection of democratic city-states, totally neglecting our collective interest in a common education. At the other extreme, centralizing all control at the national level would eliminate any effective democratic control over schools, leaving bureaucrats, administrators, and teachers in de facto control. (1987, pp. 72-73)

This conundrum is the same conundrum that the American founders had whilst crafting the Constitution. Federalism allows localities to control schooling, but it is possible for these local schools to drift from a common national democratic goal. Nevertheless, local communities know local culture, values, and morals and can thus be more connected to a greater sense of democracy.

One sphere of education that is largely ignored by Gutmann is that of the economic sphere. The economic aim and job preparation of schools could also be a part of the national democratic ideal, made evident in the modern educational reform movement in which academic content standards require narrow specific skills (Ravitch, 2010). These standards are promoted as a way to prepare students for college or careers, and they are similar in all 50 states. As well, this was largely important in the period following World War One when the Smith-Hughes Act was passed, which gave federal monies to support vocational schools that were aimed at giving students job skills (Conlan, 1981).

A particular time that exemplifies the complications of allowing local governments to make their own decisions with regard to education was in the American South after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (Brown (1), n.d.) court ruling. This ruling ordered integration in schools throughout the United States. Had it been left up to the state or local school boards, it is obvious that racial integration would not have taken place; thus the federal government became involved in the situation. The federal government adds an additional layer to ensure that students are treated equally under the law, aiding, therefore, in the perpetuation a national democratic identity. Not only was school integration highly controversial at the time, it is still a perpetual problem in the United States (Hannah-Jones, 2014). If common democratic ideals are not conveyed to future self-rulers in the United States, then basic rights that are secured by the U.S. legal system are at risk. It should be noted that common ideas and ideas about community, in general, are



not just limited to geographical place. A sense of community can also be found in virtual spaces or as part of a social/racial/religious group. Yet, Guttman (1987) considers national ideals as an important part of the democratic project. Schools do not necessarily have to be formed around specific place or neighborhood for this to work, and perhaps a new conception of community is necessary.

### **History of Federalism in Education**

After the 1957 launch of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik, the United States federal government became much more involved in K-12 education policy. This culminated with the watershed legislation called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or ESEA. This section of this paper will explore the historical trend of federal involvement in K-12 education and the role that the states have played in the history of public education.

#### ***Early Days of the Republic***

At the same time that the Constitutional Convention was taking place in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787, the Continental Congress approved a piece of legislation called the Northwest Ordinance. This legal document became the governing document for the Northwest Territory of the United States, which included Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. Many of the provisions that were included in the Northwest Ordinance were also in the United States Constitution; however, some of the provisions stand out as powers we don't usually associate with the federal government. One such provision was the inclusion of a statement calling for schools in the Northwest Territory, which reads, "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" (Swan, 1965, p. 1). Another important piece of legislation passed by the Continental Congress was the Land Ordinance of 1785. This piece of legislation also called for land to be reserved in townships, and surveyors were to divide sections of this land for the purpose of building schools (Swan, 1965).

During the Constitutional Convention debates, James Madison actually proposed the creation of a national university, but this proposal was left out of the final draft of the Constitution. Over two decades later, Madison, the father of the Constitution, brought the issue up again to the Congress, but the Congress believed such an act would be unconstitutional (Madsen, 1962). However, neither primary nor secondary education was discussed in the Constitutional Convention.

Why was the Congress so apprehensive about using the federal gov-

ernment to create schools? The *Constitution* does not mention education, and the Tenth Amendment of the Bill of Rights, says that anything not explicitly addressed in the *Constitution* is left to the individual states. Carl L. Bankston (2010) argues that the founders would never have even considered placing local schools under the care of the federal government and that local schools were central to each community and also run by the input of each local community. Onuf (1987) argues that the founders were completely in touch with the mainstream ideas of education when they approved the Northwest Ordinance. It was common thought among those who were in power at the time that an educated citizenry was of paramount importance. However, education and the conception of republican motherhood still was the primary responsibility of parents, the church, and the community; thus, keeping education at a local level was the norm for the time. Another reason that schooling was viewed as important was the threat that came from the western lands. When white American settlers moved westward, they would often settle in remote areas with little contact from the more civilized coastal cities. This made education even more important in the Northwest, as it provided a way for Americans to be in touch with the ideas that made the American republic (Onuf, 1987). A federal system, such as the one in the United States, shares power between states and the national government. Federalism can be thought of as a Venn-diagram, both the central government and state governments have specific functions to perform, but there is an area where they share power. States also delegate power to local governments, which include townships, villages, cities, counties, and school boards, but in the American Republic, states reign supreme over local governments. However, state constitutions included provisions that called for education of the citizenry, which was believed to be necessary by the American Founders in order to have a republican citizenry (Onuf, 1987).

### ***Growth of Public Education in States***

Public education has developed distinctively in each state and region in the United States. With the assumption that wealthy people could afford to pay for their own education, Pennsylvania was the first state to require public education for the poor in 1790, with New York following suit shortly thereafter in 1805. Thomas Jefferson proposed an idea for a public school system in Virginia that would allow for all white males to be educated and continue their education based on merit (Mercer, 1993). The system that was proposed by Jefferson was considered radical as public schools sanctioned by the states were not in existence at the time he proposed this in 1779 (Mercer, 1993). Jefferson had hoped to use

this system to replace the aristocracies that had existed in European dominions with natural aristocracies that would form out of ability. A natural aristocracy (meritocracy) allows for those who prove themselves in schooling to advance upward in school, and also in positions of power, according to their intellectual ability. One key difference with the vision of Jefferson and that of the schools already in existence was that public schools would not be connected to a religious ideology and instead served the purpose of preparation for future citizens in the American republic. Jefferson believed that breaking the “Tyranny” (Mercer, 1993, p.23) of the influence by different Christian denominations was crucial in the development of education in a free society for people to have open minds. Massachusetts was the first state both to have a tuition-free high school in 1820 and compulsory education in 1852 (Mercer, 1993).

The movement toward public education is often referred to as the common school movement, which spread to most states during the 1800’s (Cremin, 1980). This movement was led by Horace Mann, the first superintendent of public schools in the state of Massachusetts, who believed that public schools for all children would provide equalization for all future citizens in the United States (Cremin, 1980). Gutek (1997) argues that in many ways Mann was influenced by the founding generation and that he carried on the Jeffersonian vision of schools that were not dominated by sectarian influence. Mann believed that social conditions played a large role in the shaping of individuals, and that all children, including those on the frontier and in the inner-city, should have an adequate education. Mann’s conception for the common school came with a worldview that embodied republican ideals, and Mann thought that this worldview was best for all (Gutek, 1997). Mann believed that the function of society depended on a “literate, diligent, productive, and responsible” (Gutek, 1997, p.207) citizenry. In order for these necessary components to come to fruition, Mann called for public schools that were “socially integrative” and “publically supported and governed” (Gutek, 1997, p. 208.) During the time of Mann’s activity, almost every state adopted some sort of public school system. Yet, these schools operated under a governing structure of local control, which is still visible in schools with local school boards today.

The 20th century brought with it new challenges as more and more children began to attend school. After World War One, urban populations swelled, and vocational education and secondary education became normal parts of the American landscape. By 1930, every state had some sort of compulsory education law, leading to increased control of schools by cities, states, and eventually more control from the federal government (Gutek, 1997).

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***Federal Involvement in Education***

The founders saw to it that a great deal of land was set aside for the use of schools and education in the Northwest Territory (Jenkins-Jefferson & Hill, 2011), and this continued for institutions of higher learning with land grants in the nineteenth century. In 1865 after the Civil War, the Federal Department of Education was created, yet this was not a cabinet level position and had the purpose of assessing the national needs for education in the wake of the war (Kaufman, 1972). On February 23, 1917, while the United States was overseas fighting in World War One, the Smith-Hughes Act was passed. This federal legislation directly involved the United States government in the realm of secondary school curriculum and appropriated funding for vocational education (Kaufman, 1972). The United States had seen a huge shift in technology, and skilled jobs were becoming more in demand; thus, this legislation sought to provide the necessary training of men when they returned from war. Additionally this legislation provided funding to states to provide agricultural and home-economics programs (Kaufman, 1972).

The federal role of government picked up steam in the second part of the twentieth century, and much of this was through a few key pieces of legislation, including in chronological order: The National Defense Education Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Jenkins-Jefferson & Hill, 2011). These laws drastically changed the role of the federal government in education and culminated with the creation of the Department of Education as a cabinet-level position in 1980. Also, The Federal court system made several key rulings based on the “Equal Protection Clause” of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This included supreme court cases *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (I) and *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (2), which quickened the process of integrating public schools (Board (2), n.d.).

***Elementary and Secondary Education Act***

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was a piece of landmark legislation passed during the presidential administration of Lyndon Johnson. This law decidedly changed the role of the federal government in the world of K-12 education (Conlan, 1981). ESEA doubled the amount of Federal expenditures for K-12 education, worked to change the relationship between states and the central government in the education arena, called for equal treatment of students no matter where students reside, and also attempted to improve reading and math competency for children situated in poverty. Johnson appointed John W. Gardner to form the Gardner Commission, which sought to

find innovative ways to improve education in the United States and eventually became part of Johnson's broader War on Poverty (Thomas & Brady, 2005). ESEA was passed with the intention of bridging a clear gap between children in poverty and those from privilege.

Title I of ESEA is the provision of the bill that directly addressed poverty and is still referenced every day in the world of K-12 education. Johnson came from rural South Texas where poverty was prevalent, and his first job after graduating from Southwest Texas State Teachers College was teaching in a one-room school house. In 1965, Johnson signed the ESEA in the very one-room school house where he began his career (Conlan 1981). Conlan (1981) argued that the ESEA not only changed the way the role of the federal government is viewed in K-12 education policy, but also moved the locus of control from the Congress or legislative branch of the government to that of the executive, found in the office of the President. The election of 1964 created a perfect alignment of political power to give the Johnson Administration the congressional votes needed to make this change.

### ***ESEA Today***

ESEA is still the law of the United States over 50 years after it was signed into law. However, the law has required periodic re-authorization. This has led to significant changes of the law in certain instances, the most famous being NCLB. NCLB is actually a version of re-authorization of ESEA, and in many ways had the same purpose of focusing on math and reading skills with students in low-income communities. However, NCLB takes the idea of accountability to another level by requiring what is called adequate yearly progress. This progress measured the reading and math skills of every student in the Nation based on standardized tests chosen by each state. NCLB set a goal of 100% proficiency in reading and math by 2014. This goal, of course, was not attained. Under the administration of President Obama, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan implemented a block grant plan that challenged schools to implement student growth measurements and gave money to individual states based on the willingness to comply to a set of accountability measures and perceived educational innovations. This resulted in nationwide changes in the way teachers are evaluated, and placed even more emphasis on test results.

In 2016, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act into law. This was the latest reauthorization of ESEA, and it returned some federal power over education back to states but maintained some federal authority (Sharp, 2016). One of the main changes brought about by the Every Student Succeeds Act, is that it allows states to use stan-

standardized testing data in any way they see fit. Prior to this, data had to be recorded and sent to the federal government and governmental guidelines were used to evaluate state performance—which could ultimately lead to funding differences.

### **Conclusion**

Virtue is the key to the happy life, according to Aristotle. From an Aristotelian perspective, there is no separation between the world of the private and the public. Virtue is no different at home than it is in the public square. Virtue is learned and takes place by habitual practice and cannot be directly inculcated into a person through direct instruction. If this is the case, then local control of education that takes place amongst members within a polis, is the best way to transmit this virtue to ensure a happy life as each community can demonstrate principles of friendship to their young.

The problem with leaving complete control of education to local communities or even individual states is that a nation the size of the United States will likely not share common ideals and political consensus for citizenship throughout its broad territorial expanse (Gutmann, 1987). This is also a problem when considering communities that defy geography and find existence on the internet or in other spheres. Federalism seems to bridge the gap in many ways to ensure that there is a balance between the national, state, and local governments, or in other words, for all living in the United States. The balance between these three is not easy to find. When local school boards or states enable inequalities to occur within their school systems, the federal government has stepped in to ensure part of the American national ideal of equality is maintained. In addition to the balance that comes from shared federal and state powers, professional teachers must also have some autonomy to ensure that every child learns and understands concepts with which some might not agree. This autonomy prevents ossification of the profession, and balances out assumed ownership of children by some (Gutmann, 1987). The great difficulty in the sphere of education policy is finding a common democratic voice to agree with the ideals, goals, and objectives of education in the United States.

Since the 1980s, a growing trend in the field of K-12 education has been the growth of school choice, voucher programs, and charter schools. Every state has its own policy regarding these issues, but during the presidential campaign of 2016, President Trump campaigned that his administration would provide 20 billion dollars in federal aid to allow students to choose a school of their choice (Sullivan & Brown, 2016).

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has dedicated her professional career to the cause of school choice (Strauss, 2016). DeVos has also called for the Department of Education to be abolished and said, “It would be fine with me to have myself worked out of a job” (Camera, 2017). Local control is a popular term used by many when arguing in favor of more state and locally controlled education. This seems to be the trend as this debate has become revived with the ascension of Trump to the presidency and the solid congressional control by the Republican Party. One area where the issue of school choice has become divided along partisan lines is centered around profit (Barnum, 2017). In most states, charter schools and private schools are required to be non-profit, but in some states, there has been a proliferation of for-profit schools, with many being fully online virtual charter schools. Political scientist Jeffrey Henig argues that this is the center of the partisan divide, and with the election of Trump and the selection of DeVos as Education Secretary, the issue has become front and center, breathing new life into the camp of those that support for-profit schooling (Barnum, 2017). This can and will be the large issue that is debated in the Trump era, begging the question: Can market-based economics be applied to schooling? The Trump administration has proposed giving vouchers paid for partly by the federal government to individual families, and these individuals can elect to send their children to schools that are for-profit.

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