**Where Should We Begin In Education Reform?**

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One of the most interesting educational blogs in Ontario is by Doug Little. It’s called The Little Education Report (<http://thelittleeducationreport.com/>). A few days ago, Doug set out what he called “a moderate progressive agenda” in education. He figured it might be possible to implement this agenda in some kind of Liberal/NDP agreement (accord, coalition, back room discussions).

I think there is little likelihood the Liberals could be persuaded to move in the direction Little proposes. Wynne and Co. seem to me to be moving in exactly the opposite direction — more “austerity” in education, more emphasis on standardized test scores, more bureaucratic control from Queen’s Park, more links to the private sector, etc. At the same time, I’d argue that the recommendations Little puts forward might be a very good place for a new NDP government to start in strengthening our school system. Here they are:

1. Rapid completion of the Full Day Kindergarten Plan to create ‘facts on the ground’ that any future Tory government would be loath to even consider curtailing. Commission a study to consider going further with Early Childhood Education.

2. Return to FREE Collective bargaining across the public sector and for our purposes within the education sector including post secondary.

3. Get tuition and student debt under control. Many poorer European societies offer free public post secondary education. We propose that first year university or college be free of tuition.

4. Far greater support for poor kids outside of school or in conjunction with school. This would include free vision, dental care, and free nutritious meals at breakfast and lunch at school, incentives for outstanding teachers to work in poor schools, after school academic support and free summer school that combines museum, zoo, art gallery, sports, and museum trips with literacy and numeracy support.

5. A complete halt to school closures and the institution of a community schools hub model.

6. A serious study of Robert Mighton ‘Jump Math’ and a pilot program in an entire board to consider the merits.

7. A very slow but relentless reduction in class sizes focused on poor schools first and districts with weak graduation results.

8. Resistance to any privatization or commercialization of the schools.

9. A winding down of the EQAO by eliminating tests altogether and using random sampling for those that remain.

10. A re-examination of ‘Streaming’ AKA tracking as THE major barrier to poor and working class advancement within the school system and in society. The role of special ed, French Immersion, IB, and the applied/academic split needs to be on the table.

What do you think of these recommendations? Are they a good place to start?