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Recent educational trends prove detrimental to society

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I. Introduction

Education is key to building a strong society. Political leaders throughout the centuries realized that tailoring education in specific ways would bring specific results. The education system develops future members of society impacting civic engagement and the work force, both of which are political.

This research identifies historical educational trends, both what political leaders desired and how they implemented policy to reach those goals. It also looks at the give and take between political goal and societal reception.

Lastly this research shows how these changing trends impact students in the classroom and how they are prepared for the work force and civic involvement.

Excerpt 1 – Policy Brief of English Teachers

“... teachers have to, for instance, cutback on large-scale projects that require perseverance, reduce the number of literary texts that engender the empathy necessary to sociability, and limit opportunities for developing student curiosity. Student learning that could lead in positive directions is diminished when tests prevent teachers from helping students develop the non-cognitive abilities that support better life outcomes”



II. Methods

While doing qualitative research at Utah State University’s Merrill-Cazier Library Special Collections and Archives I used the following items to track political change and educational trends:

- McGuffey readers: primary text book of the 1880s to 1940s showing curriculum changes and goals of educators
- A study of Latin education from 1900-1970: shows the change of emphasis from Classics and ancient languages to career preparation.
- University Catalogs: shows changes in the English and Classics deps and in their priorities
- A study showing how presidents talk about education differently over time, at first talking about civic involvement, then economy.

III. Results

Finding 1: The shift in educational model following the Great Depression

- I discovered that after the Great Depression changes in class stratification, rise of liberalism and changes in economy took focus on rhetoric, communication, curriculum integration and critical thinking out of the classroom. These changes brought focus on preparing for a career.

Finding 2: The effects on student performance in school and preparedness to contribute to society.

- The U.S. average on ACT and grade point average is increasing. Improved test scores does not equate to increased knowledge. (figure 2).
- Because of standardized testing teachers lose opportunities to teach soft skills which are essential to success in the work place (Excerpt 1).

Figure 1 – Educational Timeline



GOAL CURRICULUM

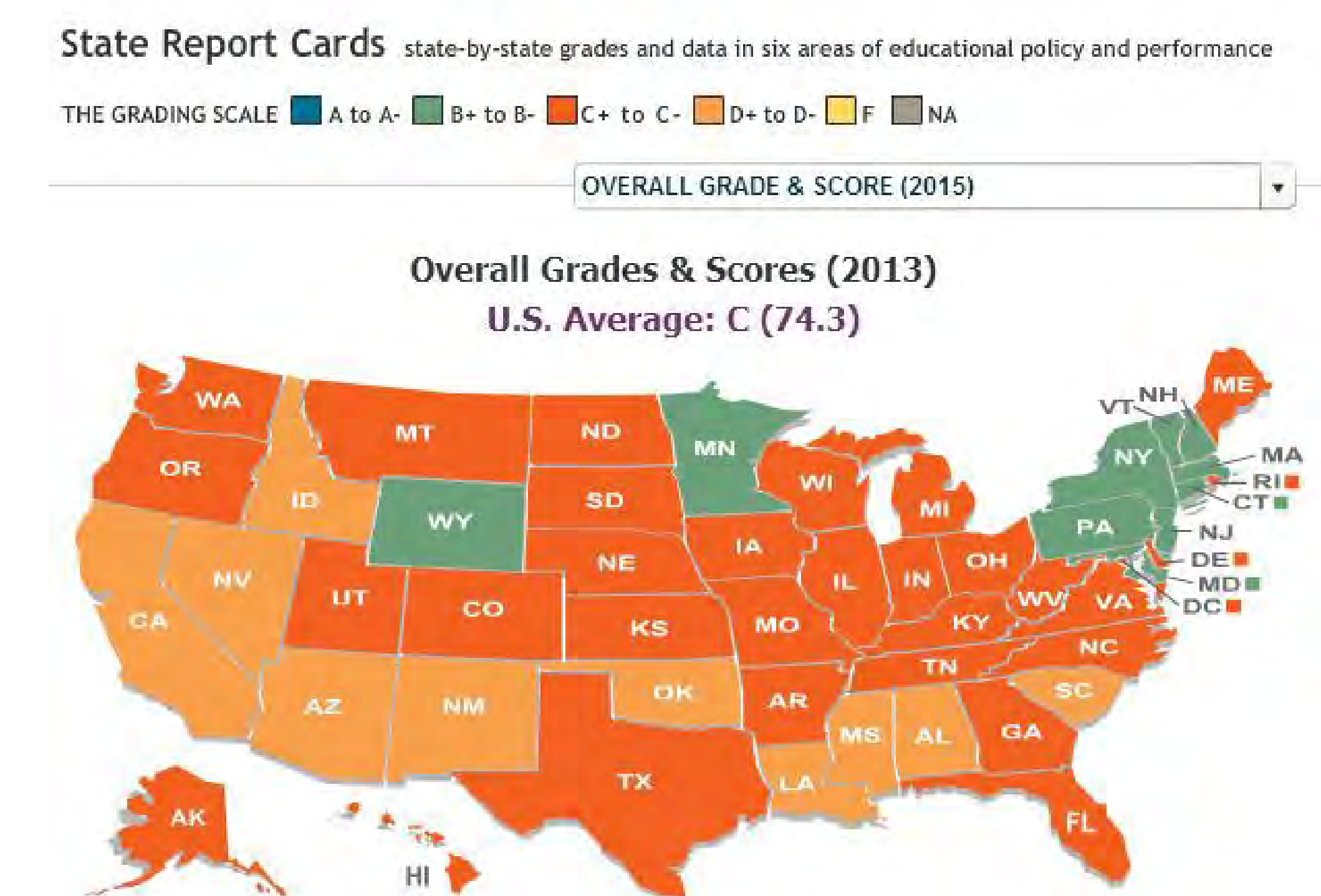
Soft skills, critical thinking, rhetoric, communication, Latin & Greek, oral testing, integrated curriculum

Standards, hard skills etc.

Civically minded, prepared to lead the country

Prepare for workforce

Figure 2 – Grade Point Averages across the U.S



IV. Conclusions

- Educational trends moved from creating students with well-rounded knowledge through integrated curriculum, to preparing students for careers through segmented training. This caused students to lose critical thinking skills.
- We need to change educational policy because current curriculum is not helping students gain soft-skills they need in the work force and hinders students abilities to learn creatively.

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