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An Education Plank of the Greenest Wood

Considered a minor political party in the United States, the Green Party is not mentioned in the political world often and many may not know what the party supports. Since 2001, when the Federal Election Committee (FEC) recognized the group as an official party, the Greens have supported four pillars: peace, ecology, social justice, and democracy (Green n.p.). As implied by their name, the Greens heavily focus on the protection of the natural world to provide a better tomorrow for coming generations. Regarding other hot-button topics, the Greens side more to the left on the political spectrum. Pertaining to education, the Greens propose many reforms to the American system (Education 28). The Greens would like to see a more inclusive and less militarized education system.

The Greens are effective in using language to convey specific feelings to their readers. In both the *Preamble* and the *Call to Action*, the Green Party uses phrases like “common good” while discussing the aims of their party. In contrast, they use harsh language like “reckless, destructive governance” and “gutted our economy” when discussing the current administration (Call 3). These language choices encourage readers to associate with the Green Party, even before reading any of their stances on political issues. The diction linked to the Green Party is positive while the phraseology when alluding to other political parties is negative. In political literature, word choice has a significant impact on the way readers, who are likely potential

voters, perceive the ideas presented in the document. For example, in the Preamble of the Green Party platform, the writer explicitly states, “we propose a vision of our common good” (4). Americans who may be on the fence about joining the Green Party certainly would not want to be against *common good* which may sway them to join the Green Party. Word choice is important through the entire platform. The Green Party’s plank on education further explores the importance of wording.

The Green Party is clear on their opinions of America’s current education system. The thesis of this particular plank is, “The Green Party supports equal access to high-quality education, and sharp increases in financial aid for college students” (Education 28). The thesis is stated at the beginning of the section and remains unqualified through the entire section. The thesis would be considered qualified if the author specified that high quality education only is only a goal for a certain group of people, like a specific racial group, but this is not the case; by not specifying a group, the author shows support for all people to have access to a high-quality education. The Greens provide many supports for the thesis. They use many phrases to indicate their support of equal access to education including this piece pulled from the first paragraph, “Greens believe every child deserves a public education” (Education 28). The word *every* in that phrase re-affirms one of their stances mentioned in the thesis. Some of their proposed actions also provide support to the idea of equality of access relating to education. The action labelled *a.* states, “Eliminate gross inequalities in school funding. Federal policy on education should act principally to provide equal access to a quality education” (Education 29). These words speak to their drive to increase access of education.

The second idea stated in the thesis is a high-quality education. This notion is similarly supported through the actions that the party lists. Many of the actions which provide support for

this idea propose changes like an expansion of arts programs and a repeal of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, among many others. It is evident that the Greens are prepared to take steps to achieve what they believe to be a high-quality education through the steps they have laid out. I noted that nine of the twenty-three actions were distinctively related to providing a high-quality education while the others involved topics like demilitarization and equal-access.

The final idea mentioned in the thesis includes helping college students and graduates. While the thesis only states a desire to push for “sharp increases in financial aid,” it is evident that they aim to help both students and graduates more extensively because they also support equal access to high-quality education. Support for this concept can again be found in their action plan. Greens want to, “Make student loans available to all college students, with forgiveness for graduates who choose public service occupations” (Education 28). Through their action plan, the writer of this platform shows support for their ideas in the thesis.

Throughout the section, the author makes clear their values. These warrants are freedom, longevity and sustainability, and inclusivity. The warrant of freedom is key to their opinion of the education system. “We demand an end to the militarization of our schools” provides a backing for this idea (Education 29). On many occasions the Greens negatively address the impact of military involvement on school systems. The Greens directly called out corporations, namely the Bradley and Wal-Mart Family Foundations, suggesting that their monetary aid has destroyed all freedom teachers and schools previously enjoyed. As mentioned earlier, the Greens seek a repeal of the NCLB act which would remove power from the government and return advisement to school districts. The Greens also make clear their warrant of longevity and sustainability. It is evident that the Green Party supports environmental sustainability, as they carry this principle through their different planks, like education. The Greens want children to

have a meaningful education that will encourage them to be leaders and participants in America's democracy. The statement, "Greens believe in education, not indoctrination" backs this warrant (Education 28). In saying this, the Greens further implicate that students should not learn to memorize rather learn to gain knowledge. This skill, the Greens believe, will produce civically engaged leaders and citizens. The inclusive mindset of the green party in application to education is apparent after reading the party plank. The Greens mention several times their intentions to make the education system much more accessible to all kids including more viability for home-schooling and less privatization of schools. Through backing in phrases like "equal access" and "eliminate gross inequities," the readers are able to see that equality is extremely important to the Greens (Education 29).

Readers unassociated with the Green Party may raise questions around some of the ideas discussed in the platform. The writer of the platform uses rebuttals well to support the party. The first rebuttal answers a large question many readers may have; is anything wrong with our current system and why should we care about this party's view on education? To this the Green Party says, "We do not believe our public school system, as it presently operates, helps us reach that goal" (Education 28). Similarly, the author draws out problems in the current system and addresses them each individually often providing a rebuttal in the explanation.

As it relates to the rhetorical triangle, the writer establishes credibility by making the party seem humanitarian. The party firmly believes in sustainability, across the entire platform, in protecting nature today to provide a better tomorrow. The ethos suggests that the party is responsible. They understand that creating a more environmentally functional future will require conservation efforts today. The comfort provided in knowing our children will have a livable community allows readers to trust what the writer says. The writer also establishes a strong ethos

by using words like “we” and “our.” If voters perceive their voice to be heard, they are likely to trust the ideas set forth by the party because *they* had a say in what is supported. These words create a feeling of security for readers. The Green Party appeals to the pathos of potential voters using this same sense of community. Parents likely gravitate to this party because of their strong views on education but the Greens also take advantage of language to attract this demographic. The writer often uses the phrases “our children” and “our schools” allowing parents to feel like their children would be cared for should this party gain political control. The Green Party appeals to college students and graduates. Using the word “forgive” when referring to student loans, the Greens can likely attract these educated citizens because they feel as though the Green Party cares for their individual needs. The party appeals to the logos of readers by distinctively stating the need for education to be reformed. The Greens show their willingness to address this problem through their action plan which includes twenty-three actions they would promote upon election into office. Voters know that organization is key to political success and if the Greens appear organized, the readers will perceive them as so.

Language is an increasingly relevant topic in 21st century America. With attentive craftsmanship, language is used to shape the opinions and influence the viewpoints of citizens. The diction used by the writer of the Green Party Platform changes the way ideas are perceived by readers; who could be potential voters. For such a small political party, wording can be the difference between gaining voters and having stagnant growth. The Green’s use of language is effective in changing the way voters view their party and its ideas.

Nearly 3 months after doing this analysis, I have gained a significant amount of knowledge about education as a system in the United States. Being an education major, I am enrolled in a few courses which intimately discuss disparity in education. My knowledge on the

Green Party's stance on education helped me to have some background knowledge in the political debate around education. After engaging in the heated discussions in class, I noticed how overwhelming the issue equality in education actually is. When first reading this platform, I was unaware of the privileged perspective I had because of my educational experiences. I have never feared how my GPA would affect my social status like some students of color have (Fryer Figure 1).

I have a significantly better understanding of statements like, "Greens believe in education, not indoctrination," because of these discussions (Education 28). Relating to my own class experiences, we specifically discussed the difference between education and schooling in one class. Education, in a broad sense, is truly learning and understanding material. Schooling though, encompasses all the habits students are trained to do because of their physical presence in a school building. A prime example of schooling is school bells and bell schedules. Students know that when the bell rings, it is time to change classes. Schooling, in this sense, is not inherently bad, but has the potential to detract from true education if the practices behaviorally condition students to focus more on these archaic microevents than their own learning. Schooling trains kids to be good at *being* at school, education fosters further critical thinking and a desire for learning. This concept, while not explicitly supported by the Greens, falls in line with other aspects of their education plank e.g. demilitarization of schools (Education 28). Many general topics of the Green plank came up in my education classes too, like greater equality in educational systems. A strong focus is placed on what events and research occurring today mean for us as future educators and politics shapes the course of education in America. In understanding and listening to some of my professors, I reflectively think about the progressive nature of the party plank, and as someone hoping to work in education, I've considered how

various planks, like that of the Green Party, would affect my field should their proposed actions and ideas become a reality.

Sources

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