

**Progressive educators** across the country are concerned about pressures to “teach to the test,” a practice that limits both students and teachers. The truth is that we often know that we’re merely skimming the surface, speeding through the curriculum at a pace designed to finish rather than to probe, but we often feel powerless to do otherwise.

What alternatives exist for thoughtful educators to help students to learn as much as possible that will enrich their lives? Many teachers have found ways to hold out for learning experiences that allow students to explore content and ideas deeply, richly and well.



**The National Slice** is a collection of artifacts of student and adult work that reflect these efforts to dig deeply rather than to go quickly. This published body of work can help us to learn from each other and to reinforce that “less is more” is both possible and necessary to develop learners who master challenging academic standards.

**The National Slice** represents a first effort to collect and disseminate a body of work that illustrates the promise of progressive education in the nation’s pk-12 schools. A committee of dedicated educators from across the nation is committed to publishing this work as an alternative to teach-to-the-test perspectives.

Please share any work that you believe reflects this “less is more” perspective. Contributions could include:

- Student work
- Lesson plans and rubrics
- Descriptions of collaborative practices
- Reflections
- Photographs
- Digital Videos

In sharing your work, you’ll help us all to learn from and promote a progressive approach to schooling. Work will be featured on our local website ([antiochne.edu/acsr/ces](http://antiochne.edu/acsr/ces)) and some will be selected for further publication via the national website of the Coalition of Essential Schools ([www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org)).

*Text adapted with permission from The Essential*

*PK-8 School, Jan 2008*

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# What is the “National Slice?”



*Slice (n.) (1) a share of something, (2) a serving that has been cut from a larger portion.*



## *How do I participate?*

**Being a part of the National Slice is easy!**

1. Simply *select* an “artifact” (something from your work) that you think best represents the idea of Less is More. You might choose a photograph of students at work, a lesson plan description, an article from your local paper highlighting the work of your students, a digital video of students presenting, or examples of student work.

2. *Write* a coverage answering some of the following questions:

- What is the subject area and grade?
- What is your name and school?
- What is the context of the work?
- What are your students (or you) doing to produce this work?
- What are your students learning through this lesson/ experience?
- What did you like about this lesson?
- What would you do differently with this lesson next time?
- Why did you choose this piece to share?

3. *Mail or e-mail* the cover page and the artifact(s) to:

Nancy Fenton  
Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools  
400 S. Jackson St. #2  
Jackson, MI 49201

[Fenton@michiganes.org](mailto:Fenton@michiganes.org)

## **The Common Principles (abbrev.)**

1. Learning to use one's mind well
2. Less is more, depth over coverage
3. Goals apply to all students
4. Personalization
5. Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach
6. Demonstration of mastery
7. A tone of decency and trust
8. Commitment to the entire school
9. Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
10. Democracy and equity

For the full text of the Common Principles, visit  
[www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org)

### ***Have Questions?***

Contact:  
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### ***What is “Less is More?”***

#### **Less is more, depth over coverage**

The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program’s design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by “subjects” as conventionally defined. The aphorism “less is more” should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

From *The Common Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools*.