

WHITE HOUSE EDUCATION AGENDA

January 2009

EDUCATION*

President Obama and Vice President Biden believe that our kids and our country can't afford four more years of neglect and indifference. At this defining moment in our history, America faces few more urgent challenges than preparing our children to compete in a global economy. The decisions our leaders make about education in the coming years will shape our future for generations to come. Obama and Biden are committed to meeting this challenge with the leadership and judgment that has been sorely lacking for the last eight years. Their vision for a 21st Century education begins with demanding more reform and accountability, coupled with the resources needed to carry out that reform; asking parents to take responsibility for their children's success; and recruiting, retaining, and rewarding an army of new teachers to fill new successful schools that prepare our children for success in college and the workforce. The Obama-Biden plan will restore the promise of America's public education, and ensure that American children again lead the world in achievement, creativity and success.

Early Childhood Education

Zero to Five Plan: The Obama-Biden comprehensive "Zero to Five" plan will provide critical support to young children and their parents. Unlike other early childhood education plans, the Obama-Biden plan places key emphasis at early care and education for infants, which is essential for children to be ready to enter kindergarten. Obama and Biden will create Early Learning Challenge Grants to promote state Zero to Five efforts and help states move toward voluntary, universal pre-school.

Expand Early Head Start and Head Start: Obama and Biden will quadruple Early Head Start, increase Head Start funding, and improve quality for both.

Provide Affordable, High-Quality Child Care: Obama and Biden will also increase access to affordable and high-quality childcare to ease the burden on working families.

K-12

Reform No Child Left Behind: Obama and Biden will reform NCLB, which starts by funding the law.

Obama and Biden believe teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests. They will improve the assessments used to track student progress to measure readiness for college and the workplace and improve student learning in a timely, individualized manner. Obama and Biden will also improve NCLB's accountability system so that we are supporting schools that need improvement, rather than punishing them.

Support High-Quality Schools and Close Low-Performing Charter Schools: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will double funding for the Federal Charter School Program to support the creation of more successful charter schools. The Obama-Biden administration will provide this expanded charter school funding only to states that improve accountability for charter schools, allow for interventions in struggling charter schools and have a clear process for closing down chronically underperforming charter schools. Obama and Biden will also prioritize supporting states that help the most successful charter schools to expand to serve more students.

Make Math and Science Education a National Priority: Obama and Biden will recruit math and science degree graduates to the teaching profession and will support efforts to help these teachers learn from professionals in the field. They will also work to ensure that all children have access to a strong science curriculum at all grade levels.

Address the Dropout Crisis: Obama and Biden will address the dropout crisis by passing legislation to provide funding to school districts to invest in intervention strategies in middle school -- strategies such as personal academic plans, teaching teams, parent involvement, mentoring, intensive reading and math instruction, and extended learning time.

Expand High-Quality Afterschool Opportunities: Obama and Biden will double funding for the main federal support for afterschool programs, the 21st Century Learning Centers program, to serve one million more children.

Support College Outreach Programs: Obama and Biden support outreach programs like GEAR UP, TRIO and Upward Bound to encourage more young people from low-income families to consider and prepare for college.

Support College Credit Initiatives: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will create a national "Make College A Reality" initiative that has a bold goal to increase students taking AP or college-level classes nationwide 50 percent by 2016, and will build on Obama's bipartisan proposal in the U.S. Senate to provide grants for students seeking college level credit at community colleges if their school does not provide those resources.

Support English Language Learners: Obama and Biden support transitional bilingual education and will help Limited English Proficient students get ahead by holding schools accountable for making sure these students complete school.

Recruit Teachers: Obama and Biden will create new Teacher Service Scholarships that will cover four years of undergraduate or two years of graduate teacher education, including high-quality alternative programs for mid-career recruits in exchange for teaching for at least four years in a high-need field or location.

Prepare Teachers: Obama and Biden will require all schools of education to be accredited. Obama and Biden will also create a voluntary national performance assessment so we can be sure that every new educator is trained and ready to walk into the classroom and start teaching effectively. Obama and Biden will also create Teacher Residency Programs that will supply 30,000 exceptionally well-prepared recruits to high-need schools.

Retain Teachers: To support our teachers, the Obama-Biden plan will expand mentoring programs that pair experienced teachers with new recruits. They will also provide incentives to give teachers paid common planning time so they can collaborate to share best practices.

Reward Teachers: Obama and Biden will promote new and innovative ways to increase teacher pay that are developed with teachers, not imposed on them. Districts will be able to design programs that reward with a salary increase accomplished educators who serve as mentors to new teachers. Districts can reward teachers who work in underserved places like rural areas and inner cities. And if teachers consistently excel in the classroom, that work can be valued and rewarded as well.

Higher Education

Create the American Opportunity Tax Credit: Obama and Biden will make college affordable for all Americans by creating a new American Opportunity Tax Credit. This universal and fully refundable credit will ensure that the first \$4,000 of a college education is completely free for most Americans, and will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at the average public college or university and make community college tuition completely free for most students. Recipients of the credit will be required to conduct 100 hours of community service.

Simplify the Application Process for Financial Aid: Obama and Biden will streamline the financial aid process by eliminating the current federal financial aid application and enabling families to apply simply by checking a box on their tax form, authorizing their tax information to be used, and eliminating the need for a separate application.

Students with Disabilities

Obama and Biden will work to ensure the academic success of students with disabilities by increasing funding and effectively enforcing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and by holding schools accountable for providing students with disabilities the services and supports they need to reach their potential. Obama and Biden will also support Early Intervention services for infants and toddlers, and will work to improve college opportunities for high school graduates with disabilities

**Source: The White House Website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/education/>*