



Romney's Education Plan

Although not much has been said about education in the presidential campaign, the candidates have prepared their answers on the issue in case they're asked the usual question: How are you going to improve education? That's the question everyone running for office is asked, from president to dog catcher. And the answer is always: I favor improving education by paying teachers more, reducing class size, and spending more money. It's a litany heard from coast to coast in every election cycle.



Obama, of course, can cite his program, Race to the Top, a plan dreamed up by a Democrat operative, Jon Schnur. His idea was to carve out of the \$800 billion stimulus package \$15 billion as a jackpot to be divided among states that won a contest related to education reform. Steven Brill writes in his book, *Class Warfare*:

It would be a real contest, with no state able to prevail because of size or political influence. The winners would be states that submitted the best, most credible specific plans for using data and student-testing systems to evaluate teachers based on student improvement; for creating compensation and tenure systems for principals and teachers that would be based on their effectiveness in boosting their students' proficiency; for taking over and turning around consistently failing schools; and for encouraging alternatives to traditional public schools — such as charter schools.

An important part of the plan is the implementation of the Common Core Standards, an effort initiated by the National Governors Association which was adopted in 2010 by forty-three states and the District of Columbia. Brill writes: "This was the result of the Race to the Top's having awarded points to states that participated in standards-setting efforts like this."

So the adoption of the Common Core Standards, paid for by the \$15 billion dollars taken out of the \$800 billion stimulus package, is a key part of the Race to the Top. All of these federal reform programs always entail huge expenditures of money for no real improvement, only the illusion of improvement. That was also the case with President Bush's No Child Left Behind, which was signed into law with great fanfare with the cooperation of Ted Kennedy.

So what does Governor Romney have in mind? He calls his plan "A Chance for Every Child." That's exciting enough to get a few yawns from us education wonks. He said: "I will reduce federal micromanagement while redoubling efforts to ensure that schools are held responsible for results." His administration would "Replace federally-mandated school interventions with a requirement that states create straightforward public report cards that evaluate each school on its contribution to student learning." He would also support federal vouchers, which would allow tax dollars now sent to public schools to help educate poor and disabled children by instead following the students to the private schools of their parents choosing. Lindsey Burke of the Heritage Foundation commented:

Yes, school choice, digital learning, and charters are imperative to improving America's education



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system. But the federal government should not be dictating what states must do in terms of education policy. Let's not fall into the trap of becoming conservative technocrats — placing mandates on states to implement certain policies with which we agree. That's the mistake some conservatives made with No Child Left Behind. Reforming NCLB is not the answer.... Nearly a half century after the Johnson-era law was implemented (NCLB is the eighth reauthorization of 1965's Elementary and Secondary Education Act), it has failed to improve academic outcomes and has left states with nothing more than reams of red tape.

According to Phyllis Schlafly's Education Reporter of July 2012, "Romney would make federal Title I and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) funds portable for low-income children and children with disabilities." The governor is also in favor of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) although he is critical of the way states were encouraged to accept them. He said: "I don't subscribe to the idea of the federal government trying to push a common core on various states. It's one thing to put it out as a model and let people adopt it as they will, but to financially reward states based upon accepting the federal government's idea of a curriculum, I think, is a mistake." Conservatives oppose the CCSS because they know that it's another gigantic education fraud.

Tea Party conservatives will have to educate Governor Romney once he is in the Oval Office. While Romney favored abolishing the U.S. Department of Education back in 1994, he has been silent on the subject in this campaign, probably because it would give the Democrats one of their great howling points. He would be called an extremist by all of those lefties who have gone bonkers over Big Bird. Imagine what they would do if Romney came out in favor of abolishing the ED.

Also, if Romney is against borrowing money from China to pay for useless federal programs, he should begin planning to cut federal spending on education. Since 1965, the federal government has spent billions on education, yet this year we saw the lowest SAT reading scores in history. The National Endowment for the Arts has sounded the alarm on the decline of literacy in America, despite the nearly one trillion dollars spent on education by our politicians. The federal government can't even guarantee that all of our children will be taught to read in the proper phonetic manner.

There is nothing in the Romney plan about reading, the most important academic skill that every child has to master. But with whole language still the dominant form of reading instruction in our schools, we can expect no improvement in student achievement. If they can't read, how can we expect these students to become the engineers and high-tech innovators we need. Brad Smith of Microsoft recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal:

If we don't increase the number of Americans with necessary skills, jobs will increasingly migrate abroad, creating even bigger challenges for our long-term competitiveness and economic growth. This is a personal crisis for young people facing an increasing opportunity divide....

America has more than 30,000 public high schools and 12,000 private ones, yet last year only 2,100 of these schools offered the advanced placement course in computer science. Four decades after Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were teenagers, we still live in a country where you have to be one of the fortunate few to take computer science in high school.

Does anyone seriously believe that the Common Core State Standards are going to change anything? We know how to teach reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic effectively. The methods that were used to teach the "greatest generation" these academic skills are no secret. Noah Webster, with one little book, taught a whole nation how to read. All of this was done without any federal intervention or



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funding. In those days, federal intervention would have been considered unconstitutional and therefore unthinkable. Education is not even mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. It was all left to the States, all of which encouraged education supported by local communities.

It is always possible to return to an educational philosophy that provided success for virtually all children. There is no reason to wring our hands and beat our breasts because we don't know how to save American children from their failures. But the progressives have so corrupted our political process that the most conservative of our candidates dares not even suggest that we might find solutions to our education problems in the education philosophy that preceded the progressive takeover.

Politicized education serves the teachers unions and not the students. The unions have admitted that as long as the teachers are paying their dues, they will represent the interests of the teachers, not those of the students.

Meanwhile, in Louisiana, conservative Governor Bobby Jindal has inaugurated the nation's most comprehensive voucher program that allows more low and middle-income students to use public funds to attend private schools. The *Education Reporter* states:

Beginning this fall, students whose parents make less than \$60,000, and who attend a public school where at least 25% of students test below grade level, will be eligible to take up to \$8,800 annually to the charter school of their choice. Louisiana currently has 120 of these schools, and that number is expected to rise as demand for vouchers increases. At least 6,000 students have already applied for the 5,000 available spots. 380,000 students are eligible for vouchers — more than half the state's total student population.

Governor Jindal explained: "We have a moral imperative to improve the education system for our children, our state, and our country, and these new laws will be a game changer for Louisiana. Over the last four years, we've made incredible progress by revamping ethics law, cutting taxes, and growing Louisiana's economy even during the national recession — but the single most important thing we can do to ensure the continued prosperity of our state and our people is to make sure that every child gets a great education." According to the *Education Reporter*:

The voucher program will expand further next year, when students of all income levels will be able to use mini-vouchers worth up to \$1,300 per student per class to pay private-sector vendors for classes not offered in the public schools. This voucher money, which is subtracted from public school funding, can be used to pay tutors, online schools, businesses, industry trade groups, and other educational providers.... It is estimated that the newly expanded voucher program may remove as much as \$3.3 billion annually from public schools — a fact that has public school officials worried.

But they only have themselves to blame. If they would only get rid of whole-language reading programs and put in an authentic intensive, systematic phonics program, their students would thrive and their parents would not want to remove them from the schools. But the public schools want everyone to tolerate their failures and keep paying through the nose for them. This inability to respond to reality makes the public schools totally inept, obsolete, and ready for dissolution.

The public schools are like dinosaurs, with a huge voracious appetite and a tiny brain. And like the dinosaurs, their days are numbered.



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