



BARACK OBAMA: 21st-CENTURY SCHOOLS FOR A 21st-CENTURY DEMOCRACY

"Today we are failing too many of our children. We're sending them out into a 21st-century economy by sending them through the doors of 20th-century schools. It's time for this nation to rededicate itself to the ideal of a world-class education for every American child. It's time to let our kids hope for something else. It's time to instill the belief in every child that they can succeed—and then make sure we make good on the promise to never let them down."

[Speech in Chicago, IL, 3/13/06]

Barack Obama has introduced a comprehensive plan to give every child the chance to receive the best education America has to offer – from the moment they're born to the day they graduate college. Under Obama's plan, high-quality preparation will begin at birth and continue through K-12 with world-class schools, outstanding teachers, and transformative principals.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Invest in Zero to Five Education: Research shows that early experiences shape whether a child's brain develops strong skills for future learning, behavior and success. Without a strong base on which to build, children, particularly disadvantaged children, will be behind long before they reach kindergarten. For every dollar invested in high quality, comprehensive programs supporting children and families from birth, there is at least a \$7 return to society in decreased need for special education services, higher graduation and employment rates, less crime, less use of the public welfare system, and better health. As a State Senator, Obama helped create the Illinois Early Learning Council, which launched Illinois' Preschool for All program. As President, Obama will launch a Children's First Agenda that provides care, learning and support to families with children ages zero to five. Obama will build on his experience in Illinois and create a Presidential Early Learning Council to coordinate this effort across all levels of government and ensure that we're providing these children and families with the highest quality programs. Barack Obama's "Zero to Five" Plan will:

- **Create Early Learning Challenge Grants:** Obama will provide funding for states to create or expand high-quality early care and education programs for pregnant women and children from birth to age five.
- **Expand Early Head Start:** Obama will quadruple the number of infants and toddlers participating in Early Head Start, the nation's primary early education program for low-income children from birth to age three. Obama will also increase Head Start funding and ensure that Head Start and Early Head Start are using high-quality, evidence-based instruction.
- **Encourage All States to Adopt Voluntary, Universal Pre-School:** Total enrollment in state-funded pre-K by four-year-olds rose by 40 percent over the past five years. Yet state pre-K remains solely a program for four-year-olds in most states, with only a very small number of children served at younger ages. Obama will provide funding for states to adopt high-quality preschool programs that seek to enroll every four-year-old or every three-and-four-year-old.

TRANSFORMING OUR ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Recruit High-Quality Teachers: Barack Obama understands that the most important factor in a child's education is the person standing in the front of the classroom. As president, Obama will recruit a new generation of teachers to replace the generation that's retiring and to keep up with the record number of students entering our schools. And he will make this pledge as President – if you commit your life to teaching, America will commit to paying for your education. Obama will create Teaching Service Scholarships that completely cover training costs in high-quality teacher preparation or alternative certification programs at the undergraduate or graduate level for those who are willing to teach in a high-need field or location for at least four years.

Support and Train Teachers: Barack Obama wants to support teachers at all stages of their careers. In the U.S. Senate, Obama authored legislation to create Teaching Residence Programs to prepare teachers to work in high-need districts. Beginning teachers are matched up with experienced mentors; engage in graduate level coursework from partnering universities; and continue to receive mentoring, professional development, and coaching support during the first two years of teaching. As president, Obama will expand the number of Teacher Residency Programs by providing funding for 200 new programs that would each serve an average of 150 candidates each year. Each year, Obama's plan will supply 30,000 exceptionally well-prepared recruits to high-need schools to provide long-term commitment and leadership in these districts. Obama will also provide \$1 billion in funding for grants to create mentoring programs and reward veteran teachers for becoming mentors.

Pay Teachers More: Barack Obama believes that if teachers are willing to take on more responsibilities, like mentoring, they should earn more. And if they excel at helping students achieve their learning objectives, their success will be valued and rewarded as well. Obama believes the key is finding new ways to increase and differentiate compensation that are *developed with teachers, not imposed on them, and not based on some arbitrary test score*. Obama's Career Ladder Initiative will provide resources to districts to design compensation systems that reward accomplished educators who serve as mentors to new teachers; who teach in underserved areas; and who excel in the classroom.

Reform and Fund No Child Left Behind: The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is the right one – ensuring that all children can meet high standards – but the law has significant flaws that need to be addressed. Unfulfilled funding promises, inadequate implementation by the Department of Education, and shortcomings in the design of the law itself have limited its effectiveness and undercut its support among many people who care deeply about our schools and our students. Barack Obama would reform and fund No Child Left Behind.

Make Science and Math Education a National Priority: Science is often a low priority in the school program, particularly at the elementary level. Barack Obama will work with governors to create flexible and workable systems for the states to achieve the goal of ensuring all children have access to strong science curriculum at all grade levels. Obama's Teaching Service Scholarship program will prioritize recruiting math, science and technology degree graduates, and his Teacher Residency Program will further supply teachers in these high-needs subject areas.

Help At-Risk Children Succeed and Close the Achievement Gap: Only 70 percent of U.S. high school students graduate with a diploma. African American and Latino students are significantly less likely to graduate than white students. Today, dropouts are twice as likely to be unemployed, and for those who work, pay is low, advancement limited and health insurance less available. The dropout problem begins well before high school. The middle grades (grades 5, 6, 7, 8) are a crucial, but often overlooked, segment of the educational pipeline. As president, Barack Obama will address these risks at the appropriate time, rather than

waiting for ninth-grade to start taking action. In the U.S. Senate, Obama has introduced the “Success in the Middle Act,” which will provide federal support to improve the education of middle grades students in low-performing schools. Obama will further seek to close the achievement gap by expanding summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children and supporting college outreach programs like GEAR UP, TRIO, and Upward Bound.

Support English Language Learners: Barack Obama supports transitional bilingual education and will help Limited English Proficient students get ahead by supporting and funding English Language Learner (ELL) classes. He will support development of appropriate assessments for ELL students, monitor the progress of students learning English and hold schools accountable for making sure these students complete school

Support Students with Disabilities: Barack Obama has been a strong and consistent advocate for fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress promised to shoulder 40 percent of each state’s “excess cost” of educating children with disabilities, but it has never lived up to this obligation. Currently, the federal government provides less than half of the promised funding (17 percent). Children are being shortchanged, and their parents are forced to fight with cash-strapped school districts to get the free and appropriate education the IDEA promises their children. Fully funding IDEA will provide students with disabilities the public education they have a right to, and school districts will be able to provide services without cutting into their general education budgets. In addition to fully funding IDEA, Obama will ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the Act.

Expand High-Quality Afterschool Opportunities: Expanding access to high-quality afterschool programs will help children learn and strengthen a broad range of skills and provide relief to working parents who have to juggle child care and work responsibilities. Barack Obama will double funding for the main federal support for afterschool programs, the 21st Century Learning Centers program, to serve one million more children. Obama will include measures to maximize performance and effectiveness across grantees nationwide.

Promote Shared Responsibility: Obama believes that accountability is essential for sustained educational improvements – not just accountability in the teaching profession, but also accountability in government, administration, parents, students, and others who must support our teachers in educating our children.