



UNITED STATES SENATOR • ILLINOIS

BARACK OBAMA



**Obama Education Proposal Fact Sheet
Center for American Progress
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New evidence from the Value-Added Research and Assessment Center at the University of Tennessee, University of Texas-Dallas Texas School Project, and The Education Trust reveals that the most important factor in determining student achievement today is teacher effectiveness. To prepare our children to succeed in a 21st century economy, we need to improve teacher quality for all students, especially those who need it the most.

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Innovation Districts

Senator Obama proposes creating 20 “**Innovation Districts**” (**IDs**) chosen from school districts from around the country based on their plans to increase achievement for all their students. These would be led by school boards, principals and teachers who are ready to forget business-as-usual and try a new path forward. Senator Obama would offer these districts substantial new resources, but in return, would require them to try systemic new reforms and hold them responsible for results.

1. Teachers. Districts would be selected based on their plans to improve teaching for all students and end the unconscionable failure to get our best teachers in front of the kids who need them most. **IDs** would work with their unions to identify barriers that inhibit recruiting, training and nurturing teacher talent and ensuring that effective teachers are in schools where the need is greatest. Applicants would propose, as part of the grant process, to implement systemic reform to overcome those barriers. Progress would be a condition of continued funding.
 - Rewarding teachers for improving student learning. Each school district would work with local teachers to develop a system to reward success that best meets its needs and emphasizes successful student achievement outcomes. High-performing teachers would be eligible for pay increases of 10-20% of their base salary.
 - Incentives for effective teaching in low-income schools. Districts would be able to use bonuses to attract and reward effective teachers for teaching in more challenging schools.
 - Attracting subject-area specialists. **IDs** would be able to offer bonuses for subject-matter experts to teach math, science, and other high-need subject areas.

- Teacher academies. During Obama's Senate campaign, he proposed a new system of National Teacher Academies to train more high-quality teachers. **IDs** would receive funding to develop programs in partnership with existing organizations that have good track records to recruit talented teacher candidates (including talented professionals from outside of education and college grads with subject-area majors in math and science), develop strong placement systems and ensure that trainees have a quality per-service training including classroom observation and participation. Participating districts will reform budgeting schedules and other processes to enable more effective recruitment and placement. The new teachers will be paired with mentor coaches for their first year.
- Bureaucratic obstacles. **IDs** would be required to work with their unions to uncover and address bureaucratic obstacles, including hiring, funding and transfer policies that leave poor kids without good teachers.
- Providing extensive teacher support and teacher mentoring. **IDs** must ensure that teachers have the systematic support they need in the form of mentoring for young teachers and continued development for more experienced teachers.
- Creating career ladders for teachers to become leaders. **IDs** would create more pathways for highly successful teachers to get on fast-tracks to teacher leadership and get extra pay.
- Addressing discipline challenges systemically. **IDs** would receive support to implement innovative disciplinary systems like Positive Behavioral Supports.
- An outstanding principal in every school. **IDs** would create plans to recruit and retain outstanding principals.

2. Accountability.

- Using technology and data systems to identify and share best practices. The Department of Education would work with **IDs** to create and use data systems to synthesize their disparate sources of data into a powerful tool for planning, evaluation and improvement. **IDs** would require frequent and rigorous data-driven evaluations to track the relationship of reforms to improved student performance.
- Rewarding success. **IDs** would develop a system for rewarding principals and the schools that most significantly improve student achievement with increased pay and school funding.
- Opening new, high-quality schools. **IDs** would replicate practices used successfully by the Chicago Public Schools where chronically underperforming schools are replaced with new, smaller schools that implement new strategies to improve student achievement and student well-being.

3. Extended academic learning time.

- To give students more time with their teachers, **IDs** would be asked to restructure their school schedules and implement longer days or summer school in low-performing schools.

National Proposals

1. Modernize the curriculum. Obama would allow all school districts - including districts not awarded ID funds - to apply for grants to adopt proven science, technology, engineering and math programs that use project-based science learning and to integrate writing into the high school curriculum.
2. Effective Teachers in All Classrooms. In many school districts, more experienced teachers transfer into wealthier schools and the schools with the great needs wind up with less experienced teachers. Districts have few levers to lure effective teachers to lower-income, high-need schools. Federal laws like Title I are intended to address this but new data suggests otherwise. The No Child Left Behind law states that all kids should have highly qualified teachers by the end of this school year. Senator Obama will monitor the implementation of this provision and work to address the enforcement of this provision during reauthorization.
3. Build on Success. Senator Obama proposes a competitive grant program for states to identify fast-improving schools, high-quality principals and teacher teams that are demonstrably closing the achievement gap. This would include an investment in a standards-based and value-added analysis of student achievement for any participating school. This new program would provide substantial financial rewards for high-poverty Title I-eligible schools that significantly increase student achievement over the course of three years. This new program would also give top-notch principals an annual bonus for each of the next three years after they had achieved this level of excellence provided that the principal remains at that school or another high-need school in their system.
4. Stop Funding What Doesn't Work. We can only fund what works if we are willing to stop funding what doesn't work. Senator Obama proposes including evaluation and reporting as a required use of funds for all federally-funded education programs so that in the future we have no excuse for choosing to fund programs that aren't working and not funding programs that are working. He also proposes providing technical assistance to grantees in developing and implementing evaluation programs and requiring the Department of Education to evaluate competitive grant programs and cutting off those grantees that don't produce results unless they submit a plan to Department of Education that credibly argues how they can turn around.