

SENATOR JOE BIDEN ON EDUCATION

“My mother has an expression I never fully understood until I was a parent: ‘children tend to become that which you expect of them.’ In the 21st century global economy, when our brains and our skills determine America’s competitiveness, we need to expect more of our children. I am working toward the day every American child has 16 years of public education.”
-- Senator Joe Biden

THE BIDEN PLAN: 16 YEARS IN THE CLASS ROOM

- **Start Early:** Education starts at birth. If there is one thing we know, a child who goes to preschool with books, structure, and activities starts school better prepared. She has a better shot of making it to middle-school with grade-level reading and math skills, graduating high school, and going to college. Senator Biden wants to make two years of high quality pre-school available to all parents and expand early childhood development programs. He supports doubling the number of students in Head Start and quadrupling the number in Early Head Start.
- **A Vigorous Middle -- With Great K-12 Teachers:** With a wife who has taught for almost 30 years and a part-time professor himself, Senator Biden knows: teachers are the single most important factor in a child’s education. Attracting and retaining great teachers has become a national problem. We lose 250,000 teachers every year, half are leaving within five years of entering the profession, and we have difficulty keeping teachers in high-poverty schools. The Senator would provide mentoring to all beginning teachers, and give those who commit to teaching in high-needs schools scholarships to defray their college costs. He also believes reducing class size and paying teachers more – as they do in many countries – are steps America should be taking.
- **Finish Strong With College Access for All:** The importance of a college degree has never been greater, yet over the next decade 2 million students will not attend college because of costs. Not wanting college to become a luxury good – unmanageable for middle-class families -- in 2007, Senator Biden introduced his College ACCESS legislation. It would provide a \$3,000 refundable tax credit – equivalent to a \$12,000 deduction -- that would:
 - Fully cover the average cost of tuition and fees at a two-year college
 - Cover more than half the cost of tuition and fees at a public four-year college.

It achieves this by consolidating two existing incentives – the Hope Scholarship Credit and the tuition and fees deduction – and makes the credit available to families regardless of tax liability. It would make it easier for families to understand the maze of existing incentives, and make 4 million more families eligible by increasing current income limits.

Senator Biden’s ACCESS plan would also increase Pell Grants to \$6,300 – guaranteeing that, together with the ACCESS credit, low-income students could receive up to \$9,300 toward tuition each year.

THE BIDEN RECORD: THREE DECADES OF PROMISES KEPT

- **Fixing No Child Left Behind:** A long-time proponent of education reform, Senator Biden wants to see the No Child Left Behind law improved by giving schools greater flexibility in evaluating student performance and by fully funding education. President Bush has underfunded the program by \$70 billion.
- **Curbing Steroid and Drug Use:** Senator Biden has a long history of sponsoring bills to combat drug use. His legislation has enabled schools to provide drug education and prevention programs, like DARE; and he was instrumental in classifying steroids a drug and funding programs to deter its use by students.
- **Making Schools Safer:** Senator Biden has been a leading voice in making our schools safer, and helped secure funding for school resource officers, who work in and around public schools to combat school-related crime, deal with gangs, and fight illegal drug and alcohol use.
- **Combating Sexual Crimes on Campus:** As the father of the Violence Against Women Act, he helped fund grants for colleges to combat sexual assaults, rape, and stalking on campuses.
- **Bringing Technology Into Schools:** Recognizing the role technology plays in the 21st Century, Senator Biden pushed legislation to close the digital divide. He was a major force behind KIDS 2000, establishing a public/private partnership to provide computer centers, teachers, and Internet access to young people.
- **Educating All Children:** Senator Biden co-sponsored the original Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which has enabled millions of children with disabilities to have equal educational opportunities.
- **Supporting School Construction:** He has worked to get more federal resources to help states and local communities repair existing schools and build new ones.
- **Making Classrooms Smaller:** He has advocated for reducing the size of classrooms, and was a strong supporter of the Class Size Reduction Initiative, with the goal of hiring 100,000 new teachers.
- **Improving Our Writing:** Senator Biden co-sponsored legislation for the National Writing Project, a professional development program for teachers of all ages – from kindergarten through college. The program trains teachers over the summer on writing instruction.
- **After-School Programs:** Senator Biden's on-gong membership in the After School Caucus speaks to the vital importance of these programs to children and working families. He has continually supported programs that provide safe, supervised after-school activities.