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A Comparison of the Candidates for the 2008 Election: Focus on Education

By Clayton Pelon

Vision of Public Education

“It’s this belief that led America to set up the first free public schools in small New England towns. It’s a promise we kept as we moved from a nation of farms to factories and created a system of public high schools so that everyone had the chance to succeed in a new economy. It’s a promise we expanded after World War II, when America gave my grandfather and over two million returning heroes the chance to go to college on the GI Bill...That’s why I can stand here today. Because somebody stood up when it was hard; stood up when it was risky. Because even though my mother didn’t have a lot of money, scholarships gave me the chance to go to some of the best schools in the country. And I am running for President of the United States because I want to give every American child the same chances that I had.”

— Manchester, NH, November 20, 2007

Senator Obama wants to focus on making Math and Science Education a National by recruiting math and science degree graduates to the teaching profession and will support efforts to help these teachers learn from professionals in the field. He will also work to ensure that all children have access to a strong science curriculum at all grade levels.

— www.barakobama.com

In addition, he seeks to address the dropout crisis by “passing his 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.

— www.barakobama.com

Schools of Choice

“We need to invest in our public schools and strengthen them, not drain their fiscal support.” — NEA’s 2008 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

NCLB

“The fact is, No Child Left Behind has done more to stigmatize and demoralize our students and teachers in struggling schools than it has to marshal the talent and the determination and the resources to turn them around. That’s what’s wrong with No Child Left Behind, and that’s what we must change in a fundamental way.”

— www.barakobama.com

Obama will reform NCLB, which starts by funding the law. Obama believes teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests. He 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 will also improve NCLB’s accountability system so that we are supporting schools that need improvement, rather than punishing them. — www.barakobama.com

College Affordability

Barack Obama 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. Obama will also ensure that the tax credit is available to families at the

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time of enrollment by using prior year’s tax data to deliver the credit when tuition is due. — www.barakobama.com

Senator Obama 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. — www.barakobama.com

Early childhood

Obama’s comprehensive “Zero to Five” plan will provide critical support to young children and their parents. Unlike other early childhood education plans, Obama’s plan places key emphasis at early care and education for infants, which is essential for children to be

—Obama Continued on Page 20

You Decide the **VOTE**



McCain

Photos Courtesy of the John McCain Campaign

Vision of Public Education

Black and Latino students are among the most likely to drop out of high school. African-Americans are also among the least likely to go on to college. After decades of hearing the same big promises from the public education establishment, and seeing the same poor results, it is surely time to shake off old ways and to demand new reforms. That isn't just my opinion; it is the conviction of parents in poor neighborhoods across this nation who want better lives for their children." — Wed., July. 16, 2008 Addressing NAACP

"Public education should be defined as one in which our public support for a child's education follows that child into the school the parent chooses. The school is charged with the responsibility of educating the child, and must have the resources and management authority to deliver on that responsibility. They must also report to the <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues/vol3/iss2/5>

parents and the public on their progress." — www.johnmaccain.com

"As president, John McCain will pursue reforms that address the underlying cultural problems in our education system — a system that still seeks to avoid genuine accountability and responsibility for producing well-educated children." — www.johnmaccain.com

Schools of Choice

"The deplorable status of preparation for our children, particularly in comparison with the rest of the industrialized world, does not allow us the luxury of eliminating options in our educational repertoire. John McCain will fight for the ability of all students to have access to all schools of demonstrated excellence, including their own homes." — www.johnmaccain.com

Indicating that Senator Obama opposed vouchers, "All of that went over well with the teachers union, but where does it leave families and their children who are stuck in failing schools?" the Arizona senator asked. "No entrenched bureaucracy or union should deny parents that choice and children that opportunity." — Wed., July. 16, 2008 Addressing NAACP

NCLB

"No Child Left Behind has focused our attention on the realities of how students perform against a common standard. John McCain believes that we can no longer accept low standards for some students and high standards for others. In this age of honest reporting, we finally see what is happening to students who were previously invisible. While that is progress all its own, it compels us to seek and find solutions to the dismal facts before us." — www.johnmaccain.com

Early Childhood

No public information has been found by the author and the campaign was contacted repeatedly for more information on this topic.

College Affordability

"America is facing increased competition from overseas like never before. Higher education is as much a part of that competition as the job sector, and we must rise to the challenge and modernize our universities so that they retain their status as producers of the most skilled workforce in the world. The answer is not to impose more regulations on institutions, but to encourage the government to support innovative approaches to education, removing regulatory barriers that prevent us from moving forward with new ideas." — www.johnmaccain.com

"John McCain has proposed an expansion of the lender-of-last resort capability of the federal student loan system and will demand the highest standard of integrity for participating private lenders. Effective reforms and leveraging the private sector will ensure the necessary funding of higher education aspirations, and create a simpler and more effective program in the process." — www.johnmaccain.com

"Too many programs and a complicated application process deter many eligible students from seeking student aid. The number of programs also makes it more difficult for financial aid officers to help students navigate the process. Consolidating programs will help simplify the administration of these programs, and help more students have a better understanding of their eligibility for aid."

— www.johnmaccain.com

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Photos Courtesy of Obama for America

ready to enter kindergarten. Obama will create Early Learning Challenge Grants to promote state “zero to five” efforts and help states move toward voluntary, universal pre-school.

— www.barrakobama.com

He also plans to quadruple Early Head Start, increase Head Start funding and improve quality for both and provide affordable and high-quality child care to ease the burden on working families.

Teachers

“We know that from the moment our children step into a classroom, the single most important factor in determining their achievement is not the color of their skin or where they come from; it’s not who their parents are or how much money they have.

It’s who their teacher is. It’s the man or woman who stays past the last bell and spends their own money on books and supplies. It’s people like my sister who go beyond the call of duty because she believes that’s what makes the extra difference. And it does.”

— Manchester, NH, November 20, 2007



Photos Courtesy of the John McCain Campaign

Teachers

John McCain will devote five percent of Title II funding to states to recruit teachers who graduate in the top 25 percent of their class or who participate in an alternative teacher recruitment program such as Teach for America, the New York City Teaching Fellowship Program, the New Teacher Project, or excellent university initiatives.

— Press Release from the McCain Campaign

Senator McCain indicates he will devote 60 percent of Title II funding for incentive bonuses for high performing teachers to locate in the most challenging educational settings, for teachers to teach subjects like math and science, and for teachers who demonstrate student improvement. Payments will be made directly to teachers. Funds should also be devoted to provide performance bonuses to teachers who raise student achievement and enhance the school-wide learning environment. Principals may also consider other issues in addition to test scores such as peer evaluations, student subgroup improvements, or being removed from the state’s “in need of improvement” list. — Press Release from the McCain Campaign

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