

## GET THE FACTS ABOUT AMERICA'S SCHOOLS

Since America's founding, schools have been a gateway to a better life for millions and millions of people, equipping them to lead the world they've inherited and accomplish goals greater than they ever could have imagined.

Education is the key that unlocks opportunity and liberates human potential. It enables people of any race, religion, ethnicity, gender, income, or family background to have a chance of realizing their hopes and dreams.

But today's students are losing out. The world is changing, jobs are evolving, and far too many students are simply not being prepared to be successful adults:

- » Seventy percent of eighth graders are not proficient in reading—and most will never catch up.
- » Every year, more than 1 million students drop out of high school.
- » Many of those who do graduate are not ready for college, for the workplace, and for life.

In a country celebrated for providing opportunity, we should be especially embarrassed that educational outcomes are even worse for America's low-income and minority students.

In a country where two-thirds of new jobs being created require higher education or advanced training, these troubling trends make it harder for students from *all walks of life* to get a job and attain a middle class lifestyle.

America is in danger of losing its competitive edge because we are not preparing today's students to be skilled workers for tomorrow's economy.

In today's wired and digitized world, jobs can be done virtually anywhere. The best opportunities will go to the best educated, no matter where they live.

### **America is in danger of losing its competitive edge because we are not preparing today's students to be skilled workers for tomorrow's economy.**

Other countries are making the commitment to seize this opportunity. While America once had the best high school graduation rate the world, today it ranks only 19<sup>th</sup> among top developed countries.

Weak education threatens more than just jobs.

Parents need to understand complicated information to make good decisions about health care and family finances. Citizens face difficult choices that will impact their communities. If we fail to act, the U.S. economy will suffer, crime will go up, and working families will be unable to afford a house.

This is not somebody else's problem. This is an *American* problem that affects us all.

It is about the students we see in our own neighborhoods every day. They will be the doctors of tomorrow who care for our health. The engineers designing the innovations that make life better for us. The leaders who will make the decisions that affect us all.

We are all responsible for those students and our public schools that serve them. And the future of our nation depends on whether we can come together to meet this challenge.

### **Strengthening America's Schools**

We urge leaders to address three common sense priorities that hold great promise for improving education:

#### **1. American education standards.**

Regardless of where they live, all students need to acquire knowledge and skills that prepare them for college, for the workplace, and for life. From New Hampshire to Nevada, every student deserves a strong curriculum in subjects like math and English.

#### **2. Effective teachers in every classroom.**

We need to enable teachers to improve their skills, measure teachers' performance in the classroom, and pay them more if they produce superior results or take on challenging assignments.

#### **3. More time and support for learning.**

We need to provide successful and struggling students alike more time for in-depth learning and greater personal attention.

For too long, we have allowed partisan politics to stand in the way of tackling tough challenges and improving education in fundamental ways.

The time for partisan bickering is over. It is time to make education an American priority and work together to give all students strong schools.

### **The Debate We Deserve—The Action We Need**

All students have a right to strong schools built on rigorous standards, effective teaching, and time and support to learn. But if we are ever going to arrive at that destination, the journey will need to begin with a more serious discussion of how we plan to get there.

The discussion must include every American with a stake in better schools. And that means every American – period.

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Improving student learning is not a partisan or ideological issue. It is an American issue that concerns us all.

A robust debate is only the beginning. We need to take action to provide the kinds of opportunities that every family wants for its children, nieces and nephews, grandchildren, and neighbors.

This campaign needs your help, your knowledge, your energy, and—most of all—your action. Get the facts. Join the debate. Connect with others who share your concerns and think the time to act is now. Raise your voice so our leaders hear us loud and clear.

A strong America depends on Strong American Schools.

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