

Where they stand: McCain, Obama split on education

Greg Toppo, USA Today | Friday, October 24, 2008



If there's one feature that defines the presidential debate on education, it's this: near silence. The USA's teetering economy and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have all but squeezed out education, a topic important to previous elections. Obama wants \$18 billion in new money, including \$10 billion for early childhood education.

McCain says schools shouldn't expect — nor do they need — more than the \$59 billion in discretionary spending they now receive. They also have different visions of what drives schools to improve. Obama focuses on improving teacher quality. McCain cites competition from taxpayer-supported private schools along with independently and publicly funded charter schools.

Obama wants to help schools hire about 30,000 a year, mostly in hard-to-staff schools, in subjects such as math, science and special education. McCain wants 60% of federal Title II teacher funding to pay for "incentive bonuses" for high-performing teachers in areas such as math and science; 35% would go to principals to pay for training to "enhance the ability of teachers to perform in today's technology-driven environment."

McCain he'll freeze discretionary spending -- including most education spending -- and believes that No Child Left Behind is adequately funded. McCain wants to tweak No Child Left Behind to give students in struggling schools "immediate access" to federally funded tutoring; private tutoring companies could market directly to parents. Obama says Congress must "fix the failures of "NCLB" by giving school districts promised funding -- and by giving states the funding they need "to finally meet their commitment to special education." He wants to add \$18 billion a year to federal education spending,

Obama wants to expand federal funding for charter schools from \$236 million to \$450 million. He also wants to expand non-profit child care, parenting and education efforts such as the Harlem Children's Zone in New York to other cities. McCain wants to expand the Washington, D.C., Opportunity Scholarship Program, a congressionally funded voucher for more than 1,900 low-income students; he'd expand it more than 50% to serve nearly 1,000 more families. He'd spend \$500 million on "new virtual schools" and online courses that allow high schoolers to earn college credit. He also wants to give low-income students up to \$4,000 for online courses.

McCain proposes no new funding, saying there is "no shortage of federal programs" targeting early childhood. He'd coordinate many of them, focus funding on "the neediest children" and require federal programs to focus on school readiness. Obama proposes a \$10 billion "Zero to Five" plan that would quadruple the number of slots in Early Head Start, increase Head Start funding and improve the quality of both; he'd make states compete to create or expand child care and education for pregnant women and children.

McCain and Obama both supported a 2007 law that raised the maximum Pell Grant for low-income college students from \$4,050 to \$5,400. McCain wants to expand the Federal Family Education Loan program, which gives subsidies to private lenders that offer government-backed loans whereas Obama wants it eliminated.

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast McCain and Obama's personal and unique perspectives regarding education. Complete a persuasive essay defending your choice for president based *solely* upon his educational beliefs as defined in the passage above. **(GPS – Grades 6 – 8: MRC a, d)**
2. Design and solve a series of simple one-step equations using each of the four basic operations (sum +, product x, difference -, and quotient ÷) and evaluate algebraic expressions, including those with exponents, provided the statistical data in the passage above. **(GPS - Grade 6: M6P1 – M6P5; MRC; M6A3)**
3. Solve question two. Define a variable, write and solve an equation, and interpret the solution. Simplify and evaluate these algebraic expressions using the commutative, associative, and distributive properties as appropriate. Describe how change in one variable affects the other variable when McCain is symbolized by the variable *m* and Obama *o*. **(GPS Grade 7: M7P1 – M7P5; MRC; M7A1b; M7A2 a; M7A3c)**
4. Represent a given situation (question three) using algebraic expressions or equations in one variable in terms of others. Simplify and evaluate the results. **(GPS Grade 8: M8P1 – M8P5; M8A1 a – e)**
5. Upon completion of this assignment, how far have we progressed through the 2008-09 series of *The Daughtry Times*? Express your answer interchangeably as a fraction, decimal, percentage, and circle graph. **(GPS – Grade 6: M6N1f, g; M6D1c; Grade 7: M7D1f)**
6. Using contextual clues only, define the following italicized words: *subsidies*, *voucher*, *discretionary*, *teetering*, and *virtual* obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(GPS – Grades 6 –8: MRC a, c, d)**

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) adapted from georgiastandards.org. Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with the curriculum map and annotated adjacent to the respective grade level inquiry.

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