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★ for CONGRESS ★★

**On the Issues:
Education**

Paid for by Buck for Colorado

Education

We promise our children that they can dream big, but America's education system fails to deliver on that promise. The system leaves many students unprepared for college, under-trained in a global economy, and unequipped to change their station in life. For 4 decades, K-12 student achievement hasn't improved, despite a quadrupling of federal education funding. And in higher education, only 59% of students who begin a bachelor's degree complete it within 6 years.

Our children deserve better. Parents should be able to choose the best educational option for their children. Competition should drive teachers and principals to make schools better. Parents, teachers, and local communities should be making decisions about school management and curriculum.

College graduates should have the skills they need to compete in a global labor market.

Improvement will come through three avenues of reform:

1. Increasing choice in education
2. Using competition to improve public schools
3. Reforming higher education



Parent Choice

Parents, more than anyone else, know their child's educational needs and are best situated to make difficult decisions about how their child should be educated. Research indicates that student outcomes improve when parents are more involved in their child's education. I will always vote to give parents the choice to send their children to better schools.

Local control of public schools means getting rid of common core standards and the federal takeover of education that accompanies them.

But providing educational choice to parents is also a matter of fairness. Many students, because of where they live, end up trapped in low-performing public schools. Parents pay tax dollars to support these low-performing schools, but they're not getting their money's worth. These families deserve choices.

Vouchers, charter schools, and tuition tax credit programs should be expanded. The Heritage Foundation suggests Education Savings Accounts, currently used in Arizona, as a way to give parents flexibility and customization for their children's education. States put money into these accounts that parents can then use as needed for tuition, homeschooling, online courses, and many other education needs.

Improving Public Schools

When parents have the option to send their children to better schools, to home-school, or to pursue an innovative education path, then public schools will have to adapt and become better. And they will. Research shows, for instance, that vouchers improve academic outcomes for the students who use them and public schools affected by them.

In order to adapt, there must be less federal puppeteering of the public education system.

To receive federal grants states must apply and comply with federal regulations, a costly process that requires a big bureaucracy. Instead, states should keep more of their own education dollars, and the Department of Education should give states more freedom in how they spend federal grant money. Most importantly, local control of public schools means getting rid of common core standards and the federal takeover of education that accompanies them.

With greater control at the state and local level, public schools can make reforms that improve academic outcomes. Teachers might decide to try a new curriculum or instructional method. Districts might lengthen the school day or try year-around school. States might choose to retain, promote, and reward teachers who best prepare students for college. Exposing every level of the education system to healthy competition will drive schools to better performance.

Reforming Higher Education

Higher education serves for American high school students as the gateway to the global economy. But those who attend are often saddled



Four-year degree programs at schools like University of Colorado-Boulder work well for some students but don't cater to the needs of all.

with student loan debt or degrees that don't equip them for the workforce. To fix these problems, higher education needs to be reformed.

Students should have programs tailored exactly to the skills they need in the workforce. Many students want four-year degrees, and they should be encouraged to seek them. But other students simply want to acquire the skills needed for a decent paying job.

For them, offerings like online courses, apprenticeships, postsecondary certificates, and associate degrees are cheaper and more tailored to the skills needed for their career. Government needs to encourage coordination between employers, prospective employees, and schools to help students explore their career path. And high schools in America must take a larger role in preparing students for their next step, whether that be four years of college, vocational training, or working immediately.

For those who want to attend four-year

degree programs, cost can be prohibitive. But competition will lower the cost. The federal government should step back from the accreditation process to make space for employers to become more involved. And public funds for higher education must be more flexible and applied to out-of-the-box programs and experiences.

Parents, teachers, and local communities should be making decisions about school management and curriculum.

Conclusion

Education exists in a marketplace. The best outcomes will come when we treat it like a marketplace. With greater competition, student outcomes can be improved, parents can be happier, and America can be prepared to compete in the 21st century global marketplace.

