What’s different about it?

**BUSH’S PROPOSAL FOR ENSURING TEACHER QUALITY**

The presidential campaign this year is unusual in that both Al Gore and George W. Bush are placing so much emphasis on improving education. Proposals from both candidates could significantly change the federal government’s role in education. This is one in a series of issue briefs intended to help people understand how each candidate’s major proposals differ from what the federal government already does in the field of education. To analyze these proposals, the Center on Education Policy drew from information on each candidate’s web site and from news reports as of June 15, 2000. These briefs are not meant to judge the merit of these proposals.

**How does Bush’s teacher quality proposal differ from current federal actions?**

George W. Bush’s ideas to improve teacher quality add several new features to what the federal government is already doing in this area. Bush’s proposals differ from current activities in these ways:

1. **Protection from lawsuits for teachers**
   Teachers would receive new legal protection from “meritless lawsuits” arising from their efforts to discipline students.

2. **Tax deduction for out-of-pocket school supply purchases**
   Teachers would be allowed a new annual $400 federal tax deduction to help offset their out-of-pocket expenses for purchasing school supplies.

3. **Program consolidation**
   Three current programs would be combined into one for teacher improvement. In the process, the current federal program to reduce class size through hiring new teachers would be eliminated, as would programs to help states establish academic standards and improve the teaching of science and mathematics.

4. **Funds for teacher training**
   A $400-million grant program would be available to states for teacher training. Participating states would be held accountable for maintaining “high professional standards” for their teachers. Currently the Eisenhower Professional Development program is spending $335 million on teacher training and the Higher Education Act includes another $98 million for teacher preparation, recruitment, and other activities.

**What are some questions that can be asked about Bush’s proposals?**

- Would the $400-million teacher training program be on top of current federal spending for such activities, or would it just continue what the federal government is already doing?
- What does it mean to hold states accountable for maintaining “high professional standards” for teachers? Since the federal government now defers to states on issues of teacher quality, is this a proposal to expand federal control in this area?
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