

What's different about it?

GORE'S PROPOSAL FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

*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 August 15, 2000. These briefs are not meant to judge the merit of these proposals.*

How does Gore's education funding proposal differ from current federal actions?

Al Gore would substantially increase spending on education through the creation of an Education Reform and Children's Trust Fund. Gore proposes to set aside a portion of the federal budget surplus and dedicate it to education spending. If the surplus does not grow at the amounts projected, the appropriations for programs in this trust fund would be maintained even with inflation.

Gore has identified the following priorities that would be supported through this trust fund: increasing funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; providing universal access to preschool for all four year old children; recruiting one million new teachers over ten years; boosting teacher pay in exchange for meeting higher standards; expanding federal efforts to assist after-school care programs; and providing tax incentives to pay the interest on state and local bonds for school modernization and construction.

States that participate in the trust fund's programs must establish high academic standards and assess students' progress toward meeting those standards. States must also agree to improve failing schools and to close schools that continue to fail and reopen them with new staff. Gore's ideas differ from what is being done now in these ways:

1. Some education programs would have a dedicated source of funding.

Currently, most education programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education are "discretionary" federal programs, which means that appropriations for each such program could be reduced, increased, or held even depending on the actions taken each year by Congress and the White House. A trust fund would guarantee a certain level of funding for the education priorities proposed by Gore.

2. Education funding would be increased from current spending levels.

Earlier this year Gore said the trust fund's total spending would be \$115 billion over 10 years. In FY 2000, the federal government allocated \$35.6 billion for discretionary education programs in the U.S. Department of Education.

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What are some questions that can be asked about Gore's proposal?

- George Bush has proposed some increases in spending for education, but has not proposed as much of a funding increase or a guaranteed source of funding through a trust fund as Al Gore has done. *Should education receive such preferential status through guaranteed, increased funding when there are other areas that should also receive federal attention and funding?*
- *Will only the priorities identified by Gore as included in the trust fund receive increased appropriations if he is elected president? For instance, shouldn't the Title I program for disadvantaged children receive increased funding, as well as the Pell Grant program for needy college students?*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact John F. (Jack) Jennings, director, Center on Education Policy

THE CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY is the independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. We do not represent any special interests. Instead, we help citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create the conditions that will lead to better public schools.



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