

What's different about it?

GORE'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 Gore's teacher quality proposal differ from current federal actions?

Al Gore has proposed several initiatives to improve teaching, which build on current federal efforts. Gore's ideas differ from what is being done now in these ways:

1. Federal college loan forgiveness

The college loans of 300,000 students, over ten years, would be forgiven if they commit to teaching in high-need schools for four years. Another 560,000 college scholarships of up to \$10,000 would be made available to students who make a similar commitment. Currently, there is no federal loan forgiveness program for teachers. Instead, states that receive general funding for teacher improvement under the Higher Education Act can, if they wish, recruit teachers for high-need schools. There is also a small, separate program of competing grants to states for teacher recruitment. Gore's initiative would expand these efforts.

2. Bonuses and training to become teachers

Bonuses and training would be provided for 140,000 mid-career professionals, over ten years, to become teachers. The Higher Education Act allows states to use general teacher improvement funds for this purpose if they choose. Gore seems to propose separate funding for this purpose. Further, there is a federal program to encourage retired military

personnel to become teachers. This proposal is an expansion of that idea.

3. Grants to attract and retain teachers for high-poverty school districts

High-poverty school districts would receive grants to attract and retain teachers by paying a \$5,000 salary supplement to teachers in their schools and a \$10,000 salary supplement to master teachers and nationally-certified teachers. The federal government now funds a Clinton initiative to reduce class-size through the hiring of teachers, and these funds can be used for salaries, but Gore's proposal is different in that it focuses on salary supplements to attract teachers to low-income school districts.

4. Testing for new teachers on subject matter and teaching skills

States receiving federal funds would have to test all new teachers for subject matter knowledge and for teaching skills before they enter the classroom. This would be a new federal requirement.

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5. Require fully certified teachers

As a requirement for participating in the federal Title I program, states would have to guar-

antee that all of their teachers are fully certified by 2004. This would also be a new federal requirement.

What are some questions that could be asked about Gore's proposals?

- Although the federal government does not now forgive student loans for individuals who become teachers, it has in the past. *Has Gore examined the effectiveness of these programs to determine if loan forgiveness both attracts people into the teaching profession and retains them?*
- Traditionally, teacher salaries have been an issue decided by local school districts and sometimes by states. *Is Clinton's class size reduction effort and Gore's salary supplemental proposal moving the federal government into a new area that could eventually lead to a large federal subsidy of teacher salaries?*
- Another area traditionally left to the states and local school districts is determining the qualifications of teachers. *Is Gore's proposal for mandatory state testing for new teachers proper for the federal government?*
- Gore's proposals to attract more individuals into the teaching profession through student loan forgiveness and scholarship assistance would be implemented over ten years. *Given the predictions for teacher shortages, is ten years too long?*

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

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