



CANDIDATE EDUCATION METER: MAKING YOUR VOTE COUNT FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Dear Friend,

With an election just days away, it's important that you assess the positions and potential effectiveness of those seeking your vote -- be it President, Congress, governor, state legislature, local school board or any other locally elected office that influences education reform. Knowing how much you care about these issues, here is a quick and easy guide -- a Meter! -- to measuring the real reform pedigree of the candidates.

MEASURING THEIR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION REFORM

1. What are the candidates' three overall education priorities that, in a perfect world, they'd accomplish during their tenure in office? Do they say anything about achieving them? Why are these their most important?

Background: Credible candidates will have a clearly defined plan detailing what they want to accomplish during their time in office. A candidate who favors critical education reforms will present ideas to expand charter schools, enhance school choice options and create policies that allow parents to make the best decisions for their children. Today's candidates also know that real performance pay can help schools and districts reward and retain the great teachers and put those who don't excel on notice that mediocrity will no longer suffice for our kids.

2. Is this particular candidate busy talking about money and investment in education and not about structural changes that would allow money to be spent on programs and best practices?

Background: As governments at all levels distribute money for public education, some proposals would tie a school's funding directly to the number of children that it serves. This means that in states or localities allowing choice (including public school choice), the money would follow the child that transfers to a different school. Money is obviously an important component in a successful school, but the freedom to provide innovative and creative solutions to education is far more critical.

3. What role do your candidates for office believe parents play in the education process? How much control do they believe parents should have over which programs or schools their child is enrolled in?

Background: As consumers in the education marketplace, parents have the most important role in a child's education. Candidates who put their trust in interest groups over parents are unlikely to govern with students first in mind.

4. State lawmakers and governors, in particular, can do a lot to ensure an increase in the pool of human capital that can teach in our schools. Opening up public school classrooms to well-educated people from other careers and giving them a fast-track route to becoming qualified teachers is often called alternative certification. This and other creative approaches to attracting new and eager talent are top

of mind for reform-minded lawmakers. What do your candidates plan to do to help improve opportunities for teaching and attract the best and brightest?

5. Finally - One sure fire way to determine if your candidate would be open minded and innovative or be forced to accept the status quo is to look at his/her friends. Do the teacher unions and others in the education bureaucracy support them? Have your candidates been endorsed by your state and local education associations? This isn't a good thing. PAC money and contributions from the education unions and praise from even the once-positive PTA usually means your candidate is not a reformer.

Background: Groups and their affiliates such as the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the PTA and school board associations are known to actively oppose school choice programs, many charter school initiatives, and resist many teacher quality programs that allow non-traditional routes to the classroom. Endorsements from these organizations likely mean that a candidate shares their philosophy.

For more helpful ways to determine if your candidates for office are REAL Reformers, check out CER's [Field Guide](#) and [Education Fifty](#).

Be sure to visit the [Parent Power Index©](#) to learn what elements and issues in education are most important for your would-be elected officials to address upon taking office.

And, if you need help navigating where the Presidential candidates stand on education? [Click here](#).