

United States Senate
Office of the Democratic Leader
Washington, DC 20510-7020

Democrats Offer Real Solutions to Modernize Our Public Schools

**The Revitalize and Empower Public School Communities
to Upgrade for Long-Term Success (RESULTS) Act**
Wednesday, March 4, 1998

Senate and House Democrats today unveiled their comprehensive education agenda for the remainder of the 105th Congress. Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle, D-SD, called it "...the centerpiece of the unified agenda that House and Senate Democrats have been working on, with the White House, for the last six months. It is arguably one of the most important bill that we will be introducing in the Congress this year."

Senate Democrats also launched a web site designed to encourage parents, teachers, administrators and students to share their school's repair & modernization needs, and classroom crowding problems. The web site address is: <http://www.senate.gov/~dpc/parents/>.

RESULTS, the bill that Senate Democrats introduced today with strong support from the Administration, includes initiatives designed to:

- help States and local communities build and renovate more than 5,000 schools;
- reduce class size to an average of 18 students in grades 1-3 by helping communities hire an additional 100,000 qualified teachers over the next seven years;
- expand access to after-school learning opportunities;
- provide new resources to help States integrate technology into their curricula and train teachers to use that technology; and,
- improve educational opportunities in rural and urban schools through tough-minded reforms, increased expectations and greater accountability.

**Democrats Work to Modernize Public
Education—Republicans Work to Tear It Down**

In January, **Senate Republicans** unveiled their education agenda, the Better Opportunities for Our Kids and Schools Act. They claim that their goal is to improve education, but in reality, their proposals undermine and draw resources from our public schools. Republican voucher schemes would divert public school funds to private and parochial schools and eliminate targeted funding for key K-12 education priorities such as Safe and Drug-Free Schools, education technology and teacher training, threatening their existence. Democrats, on the other hand, are committed to enacting real reforms that will strengthen, not destroy, public schools.

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The RESULTS Act

Modernizing our schools for the 21st century. The General Accounting Office performed a comprehensive survey of the Nation's elementary and secondary school facilities, and found severe levels of disrepair in all areas of the country. More than 14 million children attend schools in need of extensive repair or replacement. The bill establishes and expands tax incentives to help States and local school districts address school construction backlogs. Under the bill, the Federal government will subsidize a total of \$9.7 billion per year in qualified school modernization bonds in 1999 and 2000.

Reducing class size. Research has shown that students attending small classes in the early grades make more rapid educational progress than students in larger classes. These benefits are greatest for low-achieving, minority, poor and inner-city children. Over the next decade, communities will need to hire over two million teachers to meet increasing student enrollments and teacher retirements. The bill provides for \$1.1 billion in FY 1999 and \$7.3 billion over five years to help States and communities recruit, train and hire 100,000 additional qualified teachers. Democrats' goal is to reduce class sizes nationally to an average of 18 students per class in grades 1-3, and to ensure that these students are taught by well-trained, qualified teachers.

Expanding after-school care. As many as five million children are home alone after school each week. Many children spend more of their waking hours without supervision and constructive activity than they do in school. Only one-third of the schools in low-income neighborhoods and half of schools in affluent areas currently offer after-school programs. The RESULTS Act expands the 21st Century Learning Centers Act by providing \$200 million in each fiscal year to help communities provide after-school programs.

Promoting effective use of technology in the classroom. By 2000, 60 percent of all jobs in this country will require skills in computer and network use, but currently, only 22 percent of workers have those skills. It is vital that our schools provide children with access to technology and to teachers who can instruct them in the use of that technology. The bill recommends an investment of at least \$3.2 billion in funding for Department of Education technology programs between FYs 1999 and 2003, and includes other provisions designed to expand student access to technology.

Empowering students in low-income areas. Students in schools that have a high proportion of children from lower-income families begin school behind their peers academically and they often never catch up. However, there is evidence that these students can improve their academic performance if their schools adopt high standards for students, teachers and administrators, expand educational options for parents and students, adopt proven reform strategies and hold staff and students accountable for results. The bill provides \$1.5 billion over five years to create Education Opportunity Zones in high-poverty urban and rural school districts that are serious about carrying out standards-based reforms to improve their students' achievement. School districts receiving grants under this program will be able to use the funds in a variety of ways to improve student performance and lower dropout rates.

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Call for Enactment of the Democratic Agenda for First-Class Public Schools

Democrats will be pushing in 1998 for enactment of the *Democratic Agenda for First-Class Public Schools* — an agenda first outlined on October 7. Following is an overview of that agenda:

Relief for Crumbling and Overcrowded Schools; Well-Equipped Classrooms

- Authorizing \$5 billion in federal funds (to be used to leverage total funding of \$20 billion) to repair crumbling schools and provide new construction to relieve overcrowding and reduce classroom size.
- Assisting schools in wiring classrooms to the Internet.

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Well-Trained Teachers

- Helping communities recruit and train well-qualified teachers, who are certified in the subject they teach.
- Hiring enough qualified teachers to bring down student-to-teacher ratios.
- Providing incentives for teachers to teach in high-need areas.
- Strengthening parents' right-to-know about teachers' qualifications.

Support for Local Plans to Renew Neighborhood Public Schools

- Providing federal support for local school renewal plans that are developed and implemented by the local community's parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders.
- Requiring local school renewal plans to address such considerations as parental involvement, teacher training, technology enhancements, school and classroom safety, drug-free schools, and truancy and drop-out prevention.

Early Childhood Development — Basics by Six

- Better ensuring that every child is ready to learn by the time he or she enters kindergarten.
- Providing for more investments in early intervention, community-based programs — including Early Start (serving children aged 0 to 3), Head Start (serving four- and five-year olds), and Even Start.
- Engaging parents and community organizations in the needs of young children particularly at-risk.
- Using schools all day as the center of the community for services children need, including before and after-school care.

Efficient and Coordinated Use of Resources

- Coordinating the services for children and their families through local consortiums of education and social service providers.
- Encouraging states to adopt rigorous standards of academic performance and developing comprehensive plans to achieve those standards.

Parental Choices of Public Schools

- In order to hold public schools accountable, promoting the ability of parents to choose the public school that their children attend — rather than simply being assigned a public school.