



EDUCATION: WHERE DO THE CANDIDATES STAND?

by Sandra McCleaster RRT

Election 08 is probably the most historic election in decades. God knows there are a lot of issues to digest. The fighting of two wars, the price of gas, and the downturned economy are all out there front and center. So education is certainly not going to be the defining factor in this up coming presidential race. Nonetheless, (and barring any untoward event) our next President will be either Republican candidate John McCain or Democratic candidate Barack Obama. And regardless of which one is elected, he will come to the White House with his own views and plans for education. For the benefit of Focus readers who have a professional interest in education, I thought I'd explore each of the candidates' views on education. To that end, I've created a "crib sheet" of sorts to provide a synopsis of each one's position on some of the main issues. There's absolutely nothing creative on my part here, my friends. All of the following info has been conveniently lifted from a number of election-related websites. I've researched by key points and am presenting in that way.

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General Platform

At the center of his educational policy, John McCain claims he'll empower students and their parents by allowing for choices and competition in

American education. John McCain believes parents should have the option of sending their children to whichever school they feel will best educate them. And he says he'll stand ready to fight for the ability of all students to have access to all schools of demonstrated excellence. McCain believes our schools can and should compete to be the most innovative, flexible and student centered.

Barack Obama is much less enamored with the concept of school choice. He's much less specific than McCain but promises a general overhaul of our educational system – new resources and new reforms – reforms that he says will begin with universal preschool and end with college funding through tax credits. He claims his plans reflect his desire to 'give every American child the chance to receive the best education American has to offer.'

An interesting sidebar to John McCain's educational view is his embrace of the concept of character education. He would like to see it included in all primary and secondary school curricula.

Support of Public Education

Both Obama and McCain champion public education and support increased school funding across the board. More specifically, Obama says he'll provide the money needed to rebuild crumbling infrastructure in schools all across the country. And

also according to him, the feds would identify reforms that have the highest impact on achievement and fund them.

Teachers will be happy to hear that Barack Obama says "Teachers have to be paid more." He goes on to say that "There is no reason why an experienced highly qualified teacher shouldn't earn 100K." What may not make teachers so happy to hear is that he also feels school districts need to have a greater ability to get rid of ineffective teachers.

Like his opponent, John McCain also believes higher teacher salaries to be "an urgent necessity." He's an advocate of merit pay. But he also believes teachers should be competency-tested periodically and fired if they don't meet certain standards. John McCain makes no secret of his disdain for teacher unions. The National Education Association and the National Federation of Teachers have returned his sentiment in kind.

No Child Left Behind / Standardized Tests

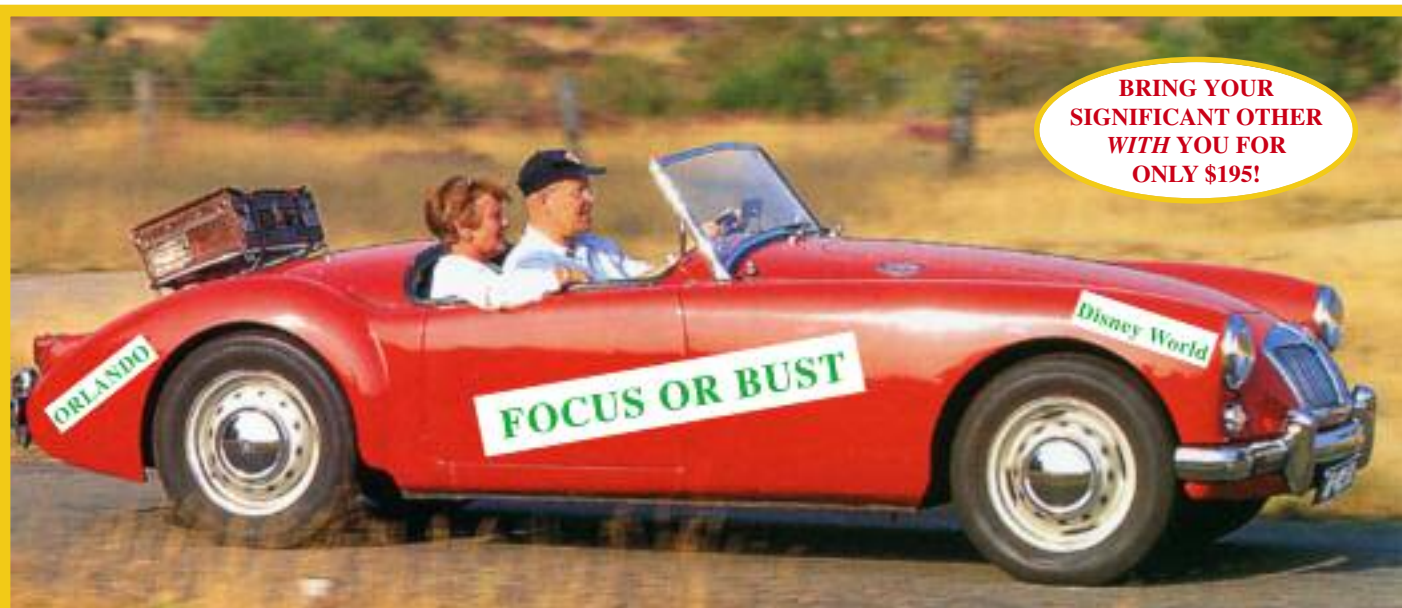
Barack Obama opposes George Bush's legislated policy of No Child Left Behind. But he doesn't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. He concedes that the bill was well-intentioned and that its stated objectives – raised standards and accountability – were essentially sound. Unfortunately, NCLB left the money behind and for that reason, many schools across the country have not been able to implement it

Standardized tests are at the heart of NCLB. Obama wants to reform NCLB, changing how the law works, so that teachers don't just have to teach to standardized tests. In fact, Barack Obama opposes the use of standardized tests to measure public school performance. He recognizes that testing is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, but he sees little value in preparing students to "fill out bubbles in a standardized test." In summary, Obama feels teachers need to devote more time to teaching and less time to testing.

John McCain believes that the core standards NCLB have imposed on public education have been useful in identifying failing schools. Rather than federally imposed standards though, he favors state and local agencies as being responsible for their development and enforcement. He sees standardized tests as being helpful, but again, believes the decision whether or not to use them should be left up to the states and local Boards of Education. With all of that said, John McCain concedes to the need for some updates to No Child Left Behind.

Charter Schools/Vouchers

Vouchers are taxpayer-funded scholarships that allow families to opt out of public schools and use their tax allotment to buy a private school education instead. At first, Barack Obama



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opposed the concept of vouchers feeling that vouchers took needed resources from public schools. Now it seems that he's softened his opinion a bit and unlike his fellow Democrats, he is no longer vehemently opposed to a voucher-based school system.

Barack Obama is supportive of the concept of charter schools, wherein independent groups receive state funding to establish new schools. Here's what he had to say. "We know that some of the best ideas in education don't come from Washington, but from local schools all over America. That's why charter schools are a great way for students to learn."

As for John McCain, when asked how the quality of public schools in this country could be improved, he answered: "Choice and competition is the key to success in education..That means charter schools and it means the use of vouchers to fund them."

Prayer in Public Schools

Agreement here. Both candidates generally support voluntary prayer in schools. Neither sees it as a violation of the First Amendment.

Higher Education

According to the Obama 08 statement on higher education: Obama will make college affordable for all Americans by creating a new American Opportunity Tax Credit. This credit will ensure that the first \$4000 of a college education will be covered for most Americans and will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at the average public college or university. Community college tuition would be completely free for most students. And here's one great idea from Obama: Eliminate the current federal financial aid application (the FAFSA) and enable families to apply, simply by checking

a box on their federal income tax return. (A stroke of genius, I'd say. Why didn't someone think of this before?) Not surprisingly, Barack Obama advocates affirmative action programs in higher education, believing it's a means of overcoming historic and potential discrimination. But he also feels that affirmative action should be less race based and more class based - largely because he recognizes the strong and ongoing intersection between race and class in our society.

John McCain favors the use of tax-free savings accounts or other tax credits for educational expenses including tuition and computers. John McCain cautiously backs affirmative action as a means of leveling the educational playing field - but only if the affirmative action programs do not include quotas.

Fast forward to 2012. It'll be interesting to see if the educational policies that have unfolded bear any resemblance to those touted in the political rhetoric of pre-election 2008. Time will tell.

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Acid-Base Disorders... Continued from page 22

The second category is administration of alkali such as inappropriate treatment of acidotic states, and chronic alkali ingestion.

So there we have it. Although most readers know all of this stone cold, let this article serve as a good review or even a concise reference guide to the basic disorders of acid-base balance for all - students, thereapists early in their careers and veterans alike.

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