



TOP AMERICA FIRST ACTIONS TO

***IMPROVE K-12
EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITY &
REFORM HIGHER
EDUCATION***



Every family should be able to choose a school that delivers high-quality education and provides the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career and fulfilling life.

National test results for 2022 show that COVID-19-related school closures had a devastating effect on American schoolchildren. Reversing these achievement losses will require aggressive action. At the postsecondary level, reforms should focus on creating a competitive higher education marketplace, fixing a broken student loan system, protecting student and faculty free speech, and combating woke ideology.

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1 Provide Tax Options to Support School Choice for Working Families

School choice increases accountability and education quality. Tax credits to support private schools, scholarships, education savings accounts, and new innovations put parents at the forefront of the decision-making process.

2 Improve School Safety

Help schools implement safety best practices (including improved school design and proven security protocols), enhance access to mental health services, and address societal factors associated with violent ideations, including the prevalence of violence in media and pop culture and the crisis of fatherlessness. Enhancing school safety allows students and teachers to focus on learning.

3 Address COVID-19 Learning Loss in K-12

Accelerate student learning gains by prioritizing innovative programs that improve quality and opportunity in K-12 grantmaking programs. The Department of Education can also encourage the replication of successful high-dosage tutoring programs, end Common Core, improve early literacy, and expand vocational and technical education.

4 Adopt a Parental Bill of Rights

Parents, not the government, have the fundamental right and responsibility to oversee their children's moral and intellectual development. This extends to (but is not limited to) decisions regarding minor children's upbringing and education, religious instruction, physical and mental healthcare, and place of habitation.

5 Cut Strings that Come with Federal Funding to K-12

The Department of Education has spent more than \$1 trillion since it was established in 1979 without improving student outcomes. Federal program funding often comes with strings attached that undermine local autonomy and push an ideological agenda on schools. The only long-term solution to this problem is to move critical functions out of the Department of Education—devolving authority back to the states where possible and relocating essential components elsewhere in the federal government—while Congress works to sunset the department as a standalone agency.

6 Open New Pathways to Family-Sustaining Employment

Divert a proportion of the federal funding locked in the broken postsecondary system to alternatives that are more responsive to labor market demand. These alternatives could include a workforce education grant that would allow businesses and industries to develop on-the-job training programs that suit their specific needs. The U.S. government can also lead by continuing to prioritize skills-based alternatives to a four-year degree in governing hiring.

7 Reform Federal Student Loan Programs and Stop Bailing Out College-Educated Borrowers

Give universities serious “skin in the game” and, at a minimum, hold universities responsible for a proportion of defaulted loans when high proportions of their graduates are unable to make loan payments. A new system should also create stronger incentives to lower non-instructional expenditures and prevent students from overborrowing to finance degrees that often have a low return on investment.

8 Require Universities that Accept Federal Funds to Protect Students' Free Speech Rights

Revise the “Program Participation Agreement” to require institutions that accept federal aid under Title IV to certify their compliance with the First Amendment and their own academic freedom guarantees to students and faculty. Violations should be priority investigations for the Federal Student Aid Office and the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights.

9 Reform Grantmaking Priorities to End Support for Radical Political Ideologies and End Earmarks for Woke Education Projects

Ensure federal grantmaking does not support, promote, or prioritize radical political ideologies and/or racist concepts, such as Critical Race Theory. Stop all programs that attempt to encourage schools to push a partisan, race-centric, and anti-American agenda. End wasteful spending on woke earmarks in education at all levels to protect American taxpayers, and roll back political indoctrination programs targeting students around the country.

10 Reform the Dysfunctional Higher Education Accreditation System

Introduce competition into the accreditation process—to allow for innovation in the higher education marketplace and to reduce barriers to entry for new actors. Accreditors should ensure universities are delivering programs that truly benefit students at a reasonable price and should never use their influence to push political and ideological agendas onto college campuses.