

# 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS ON EDUCATION FROM WHITE HOUSE CANDIDATES

## DEMOCRATS



Hillary Clinton

Over the past three decades, former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has worked to expand access to early-childhood education, boost academic standards, and improve child health—but her track record of success is mixed.

### 1 Clinton was a big fan of early-childhood education before it became the “it” edu-policy.

When she was first lady of Arkansas, Clinton spearheaded an effort to bring a program known as Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youth to the state. And as a U.S. senator from New York in 2007, she introduced the “Ready to Learn Act,” which would have created a new preschool program. She also pitched a universal pre-K program as a presidential candidate back in the 2008 campaign, and again in her current presidential bid.

### 2 Some in the education “reform” camp have been bothered by her campaign rhetoric, especially when it comes to charter schools.

Clinton has long been a charter supporter. But she made waves earlier this year when she said charter schools don’t take the toughest students (unlike public schools, which have to take everyone). Since then, Clinton seems to be trying to rebuild her relationship with charter champions.

### 3 Clinton voted for the No Child Left Behind Act as a senator, and is now a big fan of its successor.

Clinton supported the NCLB law back in 2001, but called for changes to it as a candidate in 2008. She was one of the first presidential candidates to congratulate Congress on passing the Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced it. Clinton may have caught a lucky political break with ESSA’s passage; now she won’t have to choose between unions and the “reform” wing of the Democratic Party on sticky issues like standardized testing.

### 4 She’s been endorsed by the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, but not all their members are so thrilled about it.

Clinton got the backing of the AFT in the 2008 election. (The NEA didn’t endorse in that primary.) This time, the unions went in early for Clinton, who has long been skeptical of evaluating teachers based on test scores. But many of the unions’ members would rather have seen an endorsement for her rival, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, or at least a longer process, to give the unions time to extract policy promises from Clinton.

### 5 Clinton is an unabashed supporter of the Common Core State Standards.

In one her earliest campaign appearances, Clinton voiced support for the common core. She worked to expand access to challenging courses when she served as first lady of Arkansas. In the Senate, she introduced a bill to create voluntary math and science standards, although it didn’t make it over the finish line.



Bernie Sanders

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders has touched on both K-12 and higher education issues in his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination.

### 1 Sanders voted against the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, but for its successor, the Every Student Succeeds Act.

His vote against the NCLB law was due to that law’s emphasis on standardized testing. But over the past year, as a presidential candidate, Sanders seems to have taken a slightly different tack when it comes to testing and accountability. He backed an amendment that would have beefed-up accountability in the Senate version of what became ESSA. And he got some blowback for that position from teachers’ union members across the country who support him. (The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have endorsed Clinton.)

### 2 He’s making some very big promises when it comes to college access.

It’s no secret that college access has been a bigger deal in the Democratic primary than just about any other education issue. Sanders arguably has the most far-reaching proposal. He wants to make public college free for everyone, and pay for it by taxing “Wall Street speculators.”

### 3 Sanders has been skeptical of alternative routes into the teaching profession.

When the Senate education committee considered an (ultimately unsuccessful) rewrite of the NCLB law in 2011, Sanders introduced an amendment that would have made it harder for alternative-route teachers, like those in Teach For America, to be considered “highly qualified.”

### 4 When it came to marquee competitive grants, President Barack Obama did not have a friend in Sanders.

Even when Race to the Top was popular, at least among Democrats, Sanders had serious concerns about the program. The cumbersome application process, he argued, shortchanged rural states like Vermont.

### 5 Sanders has made educational equity a K-12 campaign theme.

He doesn’t have the long-standing relationship with minority voters that his chief rival, Hillary Clinton, is said to have. But he’s trying to take on issues that are important to those communities. For instance, on his campaign website, he addresses opportunity gaps in K-12 education, noting that black students are far more likely to be suspended or taught by a first-year teacher than their white peers are. And he’s pitched moving away from property taxes to a more equal system of funding education. Plus, Sanders has talked about the power of education to combat crime. “It makes eminently more sense to invest in jobs and education than jails and incarceration,” he said at a campaign rally in Springfield, Mass., last year. He’s also said that government jobs could help dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

## REPUBLICANS



Jeb Bush

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush has among the longest records on K-12 of any politician in the country, never mind the GOP field. He’s helped set the national K-12 agenda—and generated plenty of controversy in the process.

### 1 Bush wants to go big or go home on school choice.

Bush’s education plan is, essentially, school choice on steroids. It would allow states to consolidate some 40 federal education programs and use the money to offer low-income families with children under five annual Education Savings Account deposits of up to \$2,500. States could also allow federal Title I funds for low-income students and federal money for special education to follow children to the school of their choice, including a private school. As governor of Florida he championed “Opportunity Scholarships” or vouchers (which were later struck down in court) and tax credits.

### 2 Bush is a fan of the Common Core State Standards.

In late 2014, when the GOP primary was just getting started, Bush had an opportunity to back down from his support of the common core. He didn’t take it. Instead, he made it clear that he still supported the standards. States, he said, don’t have to stick with common core, but if they don’t, they need to have high standards. Bush’s rivals have attacked him over and over again for his support of the common core.

### 3 Bush is a school accountability hawk, with his own twist on what that means.

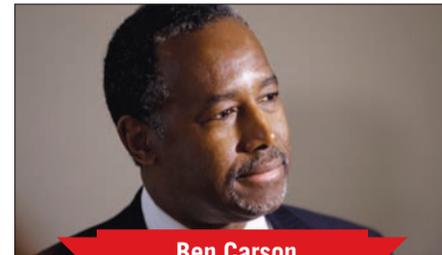
During the No Child Left Behind Act era, which essentially gave schools a “pass or fail,” Bush sought what he thought of as a more-nuanced accountability system in Florida. He graded schools on an A through F scale. Later, through his nonprofit organization, the Foundation for Excellence in Education, Bush pushed other states to adopt the policy. He is also a big fan of the Every Student Succeeds Act, which turns much greater control of K-12 education to states and districts. As governor, he ended social promotion for 3rd graders.

### 4 Bush was an early fan of the use of alternative routes into the teaching profession and performance pay.

In Florida, Bush pushed for tougher standards for educators, alternative routes for teachers, and merit pay. He later helped champion those policies, as well as data-driven instruction and evaluations based in part on student outcomes. And he’s made rewarding effective teachers a piece of his K-12 plan this year.

### 5 Bush took his education policy show on the road after his gubernatorial term ended.

After serving as governor, Bush used the Foundation for Excellence in Education to help push states to enact rigorous standards, teacher evaluation through test scores, and expanded school choice. He advocated for more online learning. And he was the godfather of a group of state chiefs that supported many of those policies, Chiefs for Change.



Ben Carson

The pediatric neurosurgeon who has see-sawed in the polls throughout his bid for the GOP presidential nomination, is no unknown quantity on K-12 and other education issues.

### 1 Yes, Ben Carson has an education plan.

On his website, Carson says, “The American education system is failing our children,” and points to student test scores from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s PISA exam as evidence. What’s Carson’s solution? He wants more school choice; empowerment for parents and districts and not Washington mandarins; “innovative ideas” for education; new block grants to allow states to reward good teachers; and a “streamlined and transparent” student loan process.

### 2 Carson is no fan of “free college.”

Democratic contender and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders’ wants to make public colleges and universities tuition-free. But Carson is having none of that. During a GOP debate, Carson dismissed the idea as unrealistic and misguided. He does, however, want a “reduction in tuition costs,” because Carson says student debt ultimately impacts the nation’s global economic competitiveness.

### 3 He once said that property taxes contribute to inequitable education, but later clarified what he meant.

In 2014, Carson told Politico that because affluent neighborhoods generate more revenue for schools, that tax structure perpetuates a system that doesn’t help upward mobility: “Wouldn’t it make more sense to put the money in a pot and redistribute it throughout the country so that public schools are equal, whether you’re in a poor area or a wealthy area?” But when asked about those remarks last year, Carson said to CNN that he didn’t favor significant wealth redistribution as a general principle, saying that “the great divide between the haves and the have-nots is education.” On Facebook last year, Carson also said, “I do not support the national pooling of property tax receipts.”

### 4 Carson is a fan of Title I funding.

In that same Facebook post, he also expressed support for Title I funding, the U.S. Department of Education’s single largest grant for K-12, targeted at disadvantaged students. He wrote that he supports Title I in order “to raise up poor inner-city and rural schools to a level where these children can get the education they deserve.” Carson didn’t specify in that statement, however, whether he wants more Title I money for education than what schools currently receive.

### 5 He says confronting gunmen in an attack at school is the right idea.

After a shooting at Umpqua Community College in Oregon that left 10 people dead last October, Carson said that people in the middle of such attacks should not be passive. “I would say, ‘Hey guys, everybody attack him. He may shoot me, but he can’t get us all,’” Carson told the Associated Press.

## The major party hopefuls still in the race as of last week boasted widely varied records and stances on K-12.

By Alyson Klein & Andrew Ujifusa



Ted Cruz

Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas epitomizes several Republican positions regarding education, particularly when it comes to the federal government's role in public schools. He hasn't made many waves when it comes to K-12 policy in the Senate, but he has backed notable legislation, while opposing the biggest K-12 bill to come down the pike in 15 years.

### 1 Ted Cruz is no fan of the U.S. Department of Education.

He's one of several current or former Republican presidential candidates who've said they'd either consider drastic cuts to the Education Department, or abolish the agency outright. During one debate, in fact, when he was naming five federal agencies he'd like to eliminate, Cruz slipped up and forgot to mention the Education Department, instead naming the Department of Commerce twice. (He later corrected his error to include the Education Department.) Cruz pitched it as part of a broader plan to cut \$500 billion in federal spending.

### 2 The Common Core State Standards? Imagine a world without them.

That's pretty much what Cruz has to say about the standards. In his campaign kick-off speech at Liberty University last year, Cruz said to his audience, "Instead of a federal government that seeks to dictate school curriculum through common core ... imagine repealing every word of common core." It's tough to square Cruz's words with the fact that states, not the federal government, adopt academic standards.

### 3 Cruz to feds: Back off on accountability.

Earlier this year, Cruz, along with fellow GOP Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, co-sponsored the "A-plus" Act which would have allowed states to opt out of any federal accountability requirements altogether. Basically, whether it involves standards, curriculum, or assessments, Cruz doesn't want the federal government anywhere near what states or districts want to do.

### 4 Cruz does not like the newest version of the federal K-12 education law.

When the Every Student Succeeds Act came up for a vote in the Senate, Cruz gave it a thumbs-down. The consensus view is that ESSA shifts more decisionmaking to state and local education officials, which he and other candidates want to see. But it keeps the testing mandates for grades 3 through 8 and high school, and puts certain requirements on states when it comes to K-12 oversight.

### 5 What's "the civil rights issue of our era"? If you guessed "school choice," then Ted Cruz agrees with you.

Last year, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that marked the official desegregation of American public schools, Cruz said the meaning of *Brown* was being undermined by President Barack Obama because his administration has opposed voucher programs in the District of Columbia and Louisiana. Cruz said too many children are "trapped" in underperforming schools and are entitled to an escape route.



John Kasich

Ohio Gov. John Kasich is a budget hawk who actually boosted education funding as governor and—unlike some other Republican candidates—likes the Common Core State Standards.

### 1 He doesn't want to get rid of the U.S. Department of Education, but he wants it be a lot smaller.

Kasich has said he'd like to consolidate roughly 100 programs in the department into four block grants. (He wasn't specific about what they would be for.) The money would go to states and districts with few strings attached.

### 2 Unlike some others, he's stuck by the Common Core State Standards.

He's the only Republican candidate other than Bush who still likes the common core, even as the standards have become a popular GOP punching bag. And so far, he hasn't gotten a lot of grief from his rivals for that stance, unlike Bush.

### 3 Kasich tried to strip teachers and other public employees of most of their collective bargaining rights.

Kasich signed a law that would get rid of these rights in 2011, but voters in the Buckeye State ended up rejecting the move at the ballot box later that same year. The pushback came in no small part from the Ohio Education Association.

### 4 He may be a fiscal conservative, but he shook loose some money for K-12.

As chairman of the House Budget Committee, Kasich was pretty tight-fisted. Back in 1995, he moved a budget that cut education spending by \$10 billion. But as governor of Ohio in 2013, he approved a \$1.2 billion increase for K-12 over two years, part of which went to equalizing funding.

### 5 His record on charters is mixed.

Ohio added some charter schools when Kasich was at the helm, from about 325 in 2011 to around 370. And he has pushed for their expansion. But students in Ohio charters lag behind their public school peers, a recent study found. And some Ohio charters have been entangled in state and federal investigations over various issues. However, Kasich called for an overhaul of Ohio's charter school law in late 2014 and signed a bill revamping state charter oversight policies last fall.



Marco Rubio

First-term Florida Sen. Marco Rubio doesn't have the K-12 record of other candidates, but he has staked out his positions on a number of hot-button education issues, from choice to work-force readiness.

### 1 He wants to get rid of the U.S. Department of Education.

Rubio is far from the only candidate who has said we should abolish the Education Department. But it's still an interesting position for someone who is running in the so-called "establishment lane" for the GOP nod. Consider this along with Rubio's vote against the Senate version of the Every Student Succeeds Act—which scales back the federal role in K-12 considerably, but not as much as some conservatives would have liked—and it's clear that the Florida senator is really running to the right on K-12 policy.

### 2 Rubio's no fan of the Common Core State Standards.

Rubio has used his stance on the common core to attack other GOP rivals. The interesting part: Rubio had a chance to vote against federal involvement in common core when the Senate considered the final version of the Every Student Succeeds Act, which includes such restrictions. But he didn't take it.

### 3 Rubio has rushed to hug school choice.

He's sponsored legislation to make tax credits available for private school tuition and worked with Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., on charter legislation. He also gave the thumbs-up to big school choice bills sponsored by Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and Tim Scott, R-S.C. Some of Rubio's top rivals, including Bush and Cruz, have also talked up choice.

### 4 Rubio has supported standards and accountability at the state level.

In his book, "An American Son: A Memoir," Rubio said he was "very proud" that as speaker of the Florida House "we continued the accountability-based education reforms begun by Jeb Bush." Namely, the state "raised the standards for math, science, and language arts to better prepare students for college, for technical schools and for success in the global marketplace."

### 5 He's very interested in job training and college access.

That makes Rubio a great fit for the 2016 campaign, which has focused more on postsecondary issues than improving K-12 schools. Rubio collaborated with Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., on a bill that would bring transparency to the process of picking a college. And he worked with Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., on a bill to create "American Dream" accounts that help low-income students prepare for college. During debates, Rubio has said a couple different times that America needs to step up its game on vocational education.



Donald Trump

He's never been a policymaker, but that hasn't stopped real estate developer and Republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump from holding a few clear views about education.

### 1 When it comes to getting bang for the buck in education, Trump thinks America is doing a pretty shoddy job.

Trump at a rally in Tulsa, Okla., blasted U.S. students for performing poorly on international tests compared to their peers, including some from countries he told the audience "you've never heard of." It's true that on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), American students have not performed particularly well, although the majority of countries that outperform the U.S. are developed nations, not the "Third World" countries Trump referenced in his speech.

### 2 Trump opposes the Common Core State Standards.

He's fond of calling them a "disaster," and he's attacked rival Jeb Bush, in particular, for supporting them. In his victory speech after the New Hampshire GOP primary he declared: "We're getting rid of common core. We're going to educate our children locally. We educate our children locally."

### 3 Gun-free school zones don't keep children safe, they endanger them, Trump says.

In a campaign speech in Burlington, Vt., he lambasted these zones, enacted through federal law in 1990, as "bait" for people who wish to do harm. He's also said that teachers armed with guns could have prevented the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in 2012. He wants to get rid of gun-free school zones his first day in office, although he'd need the help of Congress to follow through on that pledge.

### 4 What else doesn't help children, or education in general?

The U.S. Department of Education, Trump says. He's called the department a "massive behemoth" and that he'd consider getting rid of it. On one occasion, he said he'd at least consider slashing the department "way, way down."

### 5 If you want to know about his beliefs about education beyond K-12, there's Trump University.

As The Washington Post reporter Emma Brown wrote last year, Trump parlayed his success in real estate development into offering a series of courses students could take to learn about the business. But Trump University wasn't really a university at all. It was also short-lived and targeted by multiple lawsuits contending that students were ripped off by Trump's endeavor through misleading advertising.