



## Ed in '08: New England's Favorite Son

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As the New England Board of Higher Education proudly marks the transformation from 20 years of *Connection* to the new look of *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION*, we also cast our attention toward a national campaign to raise the profile of education itself. Ed in '08 is a \$60 million campaign to engage everyday American citizens in the education debate. Check your tax bracket and political affiliation at the door.

The campaign, supported by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and chaired by former Colorado Governor and Los Angeles school Superintendent Roy Romer, is designed to raise education to the top of the country's domestic priorities. The campaign challenges the 2008 presidential candidates to begin a serious dialogue about how they will improve American schools.

Since New England will be sustained and grow on the strength of its education, Ed in '08 is surely among the region's favorite sons in this race. Like NEBHE's College Ready New England initiative, the Ed in '08 campaign, which opened its New England office in New Hampshire this month, uses creative media strategies to excite the public about educational success. Ed in '08 is asking communities and their members to join town meetings, PTA discussions and a national debate on education.

With this high-level push, it could be education's year. Just five years ago, the president and Congress gave

us the deepest federal involvement in schools in nearly 30 years with No Child Left Behind legislation.

But to be realistic, while NCLB has cast much-needed light on some of the challenges facing American schools, it has also underscored the problems of using one set of standards for students with multiple learning abilities, diverse learning styles and a range of demographics. Further, NCLB encourages school systems to "teach to the test," depriving youngsters of the best, *spontaneous* moments in their education.

Ed in '08's main platform is to promote sensible American education standards, offer incentives for effective teaching and provide students with more time for in-depth learning—all critical goals. New England voters will also have an interest in several other education planks. For example, they will look for leadership that:

- Demands higher achievement while valuing the "multiple intelligences" students bring with them.
- Helps property tax-poor school districts experiment with new teaching and learning methods.
- Reaches New England's fastest-growing new populations, including English-language learners.
- Directs limited student aid resources to the students who need them most.
- Promotes the region's higher education enterprise, with its 270 colleges, quarter-million employees and

\$20 billion annual budgets, as a crucial American industry—indeed, a major, but often overlooked, *export* industry.

And remember, a focus on education does not suggest a single-issue campaign. Far from it. Many students are remarkably unprepared for school every day the morning bell rings. An appalling number of elementary and secondary school students come to school without breakfast in their stomach, school materials or the peace of mind that comes from a stable home environment. Today's schools aren't just responsible for education. Teachers are asked to be social workers, identifying instances of abuse and neglect. Many schools in poor communities provide two-thirds of children's balanced meals each day. When a child hasn't had breakfast, feels unsafe or is totally unprepared, the classroom is a prison.

An "education president" will also be an anti-poverty president, a health care president, a science and technology president and a creative economy president. These are issues that deeply affect our College Ready program, and this national campaign provides a stage to spark real change. In 2008, we need answers from the candidates on these pressing needs and a platform that makes real learning possible for all.

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