

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFE SCHOOL REOPENING

Politics should not be the driver in reopening public schools and campuses this fall. For students to safely return to school buildings and campuses, [families, educators, and communities need to have the opportunity to be heard](#). No student or educator should be expected to show up in learning environments that do not align with the advice of health and safety experts, and they should have reliable access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and the ability to frequently sanitize their surroundings.

But even with full access to PPE when the time is right to reopen public schools and campuses, the country will miss the mark without a national commitment to reverse long-standing [racial inequities, which have become intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Families, educators, and communities are looking for leadership—the kind that places people before party; prioritizes the public schools the majority of students attend as well as the institutions of higher education that graduate the majority of students of color in the country; and recognizes the urgency in addressing the marginalization that affects Native American students, Black and Brown students, students with disabilities, and those from rural areas.

Here's what Democratic candidate Joe Biden has to say . . .

"Americans deserve a president who will ensure that reopening is as effective and safe as possible." In Biden's [Plan for an Effective Reopening That Jumpstarts the Economy](#), he assures that his administration "would mobilize the federal government, in cooperation with educators, child care providers, unions, communities, and families."

To safely reopen schools, he recommends that federal resources are made available, especially for Title I schools, that "support personal protective equipment and enhanced sanitation efforts; alterations to classrooms, schedules, class sizes, and transportation so students can physically distance; upgraded technology and broadband for new forms of instruction; support for social-emotional learning; and training for educators, parents, and students as they adapt to new circumstances."

According to Biden, [providing schools adequate financial relief is critical for the economy](#), and warns that the country "would be in 'deeper trouble' if the United States does not spend more." He finds that [President Donald Trump is irresponsibly claiming "mission accomplished"](#) on the economy and pandemic response as communities struggle and that the president "has done effectively nothing to help schools or child care providers reopen, perhaps the single most important step to get parents back to work."

Here's what Republican candidate President Donald Trump has to say . . .

[Reopening schools signals that the economy has recovered](#). President Trump states, "I don't consider our country coming back if the schools are closed." In calling for schools to reopen, he ignores his own [White House guidelines](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations](#) that suggest schools remain closed until states can show "declines in flu-like illnesses and documented COVID-19 cases . . . [and are] ready to protect children and staff who are at higher risk of severe illness and [are able to] screen everyone for symptoms and a history of exposure to the disease."

President Trump insists, "We're opening our country. People want it open. [The schools are going to be open.](#)" While briefly acknowledging the importance of safety for students returning to class, he also believes that the COVID-19 pandemic is the opportune moment to urge Congress to support a [\\$5 billion school tax credit](#) that would transfer public funds to private schools. He states that this is the "civil rights issue of our time" and that these tax credits—or private school vouchers—will help rescue "African Americans . . . that get trapped in bad government schools." Recognizing the opposition of unions to his voucher proposal, the president observes "they're not against it for the right reasons. They're against it for a lot of the wrong reasons. And we're going to get that straightened out."