



Education Toolkit: Talking Points

The following are talking points to use as a reminder during media interviews or when writing. Specific policy proposals can be introduced after a value and appropriate simplifying model.

When we think about our country's future, we need to consider how we can do more to prepare our nation for the challenges that we'll be facing in the next decades. While students will continue to need the basics, we will also need to give them new skills by updating our K-12 and higher education systems so that they prepare all Americans for the challenges ahead. When we don't prepare for new challenges, our education system isn't working the way it should to maintain and advance our country's quality of life.
[Value: Future Preparation]

The update of the educational system is a lot like remodeling a house. When you remodel a house, you do more than just repaint it: You make substantial changes, keeping the previous shape of the house, but updating old parts, and making the house more modern and efficient. Like a general contractor, we have to remodel our educational system so that it enables our society to thrive. Right now our educational system is an old house that isn't "up to code" when it comes to educating our students or providing society with the skills that America needs. The bad news is that remodeling creates temporary dust, noise, and inconvenience, but the good news is that when you remodel you don't have to start from scratch—you strengthen what's working and fix what's not. If we approach educational reform as remodeling, not demolishing, we will be more successful in providing students with what they need to build our society and our democracy. *[Simplifying Model: Remodeling]*

This remodeling will be most successful when we all work on the project together. Our nation's educational system, like an orchestra, has many groups of players with specialized jobs, such as teachers, principals and administrators, business and community leaders, taxpayers, students, families, and school boards. The orchestra sounds best when each musician is skilled, the instruments are well-tuned, and the sections work together in harmony toward the common goal of playing the best music they can. But a changing America and world have handed the orchestra new music to play, and they haven't rehearsed enough to be ready to perform it. No orchestra becomes great overnight, and the beauty of the music depends on dedicated practice by musicians who have all the resources they need and an orchestra conductor who can create harmony among all the

parts. Keeping this orchestra in mind can help guide us in our approach to education reform. [Simplifying Model: Orchestra]

As we go about the work of reforming education, it is important that we recognize that programs and services are not equally distributed across all communities in our country. Some communities are struggling because they are not given a fair chance to do well. When some communities are denied the resources they need, they are unable to overcome problems like a poor educational system. We need to level the playing field so that every community has access to quality schools and colleges. Effective education reforms would allocate societal assets more fairly among communities, whether they are rural or poor, or not. [*Value: Fairness Across Places*]