



## Education Priorities for New Administration and Congress

PICO is a national community-organizing network of 53 faith-based organizations working in 150 cities and towns in 17 states. PICO has a long track record of developing innovative strategies to improve urban school systems, including: a community-led district-wide reform effort in the Oakland Unified School District that has resulted in the creation of more than 50 new small high-performing public schools; the establishment of a nationally recognized Parent-Teacher Home Visit program in more than 40 Sacramento City Schools, which has become a model for parent engagement throughout California and the country; the establishment of rigorous teacher- and community-led charter schools and other innovative school models in Oakland, San Jose, Sacramento, and San Francisco; and the adoption of weighted student funding in Denver Public schools to increase transparency and equity in school funding.

Faced with school systems that systematically fail to provide the majority of their students with high-quality instruction, PICO affiliates have developed long-term political will among parents, community members, faith leaders, and teachers for systemic reform. We believe that the Department of Education can do much more to support and accelerate innovative local action to improve education. And we believe that the federal government can and should serve as a disruptive force on districts that resist change by: providing incentives for and pressure to improve instruction; promoting greater equity and accountability in how districts use federal education funding; and empowering communities to hold districts accountable by improving reporting requirements. Together, these three roles, when leveraged by good local organizing, can dramatically increase the pace of reform.

***Key PICO education priorities for the New Administration and Congress include:***

- 1. Create additional supports and incentives for districts and states to establish innovative schools, including charter schools, particularly at the middle and high school level.**
- 2. Revise the No Child Left Behind Act to:**
  - a. Increase funding and revise the comparability clause to require that districts calculate actual teacher salaries when devising the equitable distribution of Title 1 funds.
  - b. Strengthen teacher-quality provisions, with particular attention to the more equitable distribution of qualified and effective teachers and refinement of “highly qualified teacher” provisions to better reflect differences in skills and experience.
  - c. Strengthen parent engagement provisions, particularly in regards to parental input into reorganization of Program Improvement schools.
  - d. Identify parent-teacher home visits as a “best practice” strategy for Pre-K-12 parent engagement and as an eligible use of Title 1 parent engagement funding.
  - e. Develop a more holistic assessment system that evaluates the breadth of knowledge and higher-order thinking skills children will need to be successful.
- 3. Implement a broad policy initiative to improve high school instruction and outcomes, including:**
  - a. Support to take innovate high school education models to scale.
  - b. Increased funding and support for educational initiatives to reach out-of-school youth.
  - c. Incentives to cities and school districts to work collaboratively to improve the academic and personal needs of youth and to understand and address the relationship between the rise in youth violence and low achievement and graduation rates.