

## Why President Obama Should Speak to the States To Get Education Policy on Track and Moving Successfully

*[Here's what Education |Evolving thinks the President should say. Would you agree?]*

I know you're all interested in the direction my administration will go with education, and NCLB. You'll understand that as I explain why I am delivering this message about education to the legislature of a state rather than to Congress.

Quite simply: I am asking the states to take the leadership on education policy. Now, let me say right away: This is not to diminish the importance of improving the schools and learning, or of ensuring that no child is left behind. Quite the reverse. This approach will let the country do more, faster.

We've had education policy upside down, with NCLB; We've had the U.S. Department trying to enforce standards set by the states. I want to see the goals, the targets, the outcomes, set nationally and get the implementation happening as the states then change and improve schools.

We have two simple realities here.

First: The federal government, Washington, won't be able to give priority to the K-12 issues for quite some time. That's just a fact.

Second: Even if it could make K-12 a priority, the federal government can't do what needs to be done. Dramatic change needs to come to public education just as it needs to come in others areas: We can't go on just trying to 'do better' with the old models and methods. We have to create new schools that will take new approaches. For this to happen the states must be the change-agents. K-12 is in state law; Congress can't change state law. All Congress can do is to give a little money with a lot of regulations attached. You in the states don't like this approach; that's clear. And, candidly, criticism from Washington about state, district and school performance hasn't been all that effective.

So in my administration the federal role will be to activate a process of state law-making. It's because I want to see change that we need to go through the legislative bodies that have the capacity to make change. I want to see innovation; big new ideas. Technology needs to play a much larger role. Schools need to be redesigned to motivate students. Teachers' roles need to be expanded. There is lots to do.

We will help you in the states. We will also push you -- setting goals and sampling to check on performance -- especially in the groups traditionally 'left behind'. And we will report what we find.

But we need the states to take the lead: I do believe in pushing buttons that are connected to live wires. So let me repeat: With this approach the country will make more progress, faster.

Progress will be uneven, I'm sure. I understand that. But it always is. I want to see the states begin a race to the top.