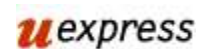


# Cash for Education Clunkers



Michelle Malkin

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Creators Syndicate – "We're going to have to out-educate other countries," President Obama urged this week. How? By out-spending them, of course! It's the same old quack cure for America's fat and failing government-run schools monopoly. The one-trick ponies at the White House call their academic improvement agenda "targeted investing" for "winning the future." Truth in advertising: Get ready to fork over more Cash for Education Clunkers.

Our government already spends more per capita on education than any other of the 34 wealthiest countries in the world except for Switzerland, according to recent analysis of data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Overall inflation-adjusted K-12 spending has tripled over the past 40 years, the Michigan-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy points out. Yet American test scores and graduation rates are stagnant. One in 10 high schools is a dropout factory. And our students' performance in one of the most prestigious global math competitions has been so abysmal that the U.S. simply withdrew altogether.

Obama's fiscal year 2011 budget already represents "one of the largest increases" in federal education spending history, and hikes total discretionary spending to nearly \$51 billion. Toss in another \$35 billion for mandatory Pell grants. And add another \$4 billion for the illusory "Race to the Top" charade to improve academic standards.

Then there's the \$10 billion for the Education Jobs Fund signed into law last August — a naked payoff to the public teachers union, which also includes \$50 million for the Striving Readers comprehensive literacy development and education program; \$82 million for Student Aid Administration; and \$10.7 million for the Ready to Teach program.

Oh, and don't forget the \$100 billion in federal stimulus funding for school programs and initiatives administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

As he extols the virtues of "innovation" and "accountability," the last thing Obama wants you to think about is the actual results of these profligate federal ed binges:

— As education analyst Neal McCluskey accurately described the real impact of the \$4 billion Race to the Top paperwork theater: "States must say how they would improve lots of things, but they actually have to do very little. It is decades of public schooling — from the Great Society to No Child Left Behind — in a nutshell." You need a chainsaw to cut through the bureaucratise of the winning state applications, but the bottom line is that the "race" is "won" only when school reformers get buy-in from the teachers unions — the most stalwart enemies of introducing choice and competition

to the atrophying system.

— Despite massive multibillion-dollar "investments" in teacher training, America's educators are horrifyingly incompetent at even elementary math. Explaining why American grade-school students can't master simple fractions, one math professor confessed: "Part of the reason the kids don't know it is because the teachers aren't transmitting that." Instead, they've ditched "drill and kill" — otherwise known as the basics — for costly educational fads ranging from "Mayan Math" to "Everyday Math" that substitute art, self-esteem and multiculturalism for the fundamentals of computation.

— Among the supposedly cutting-edge programs funded by Obama's federal stimulus program is the \$49 million technology initiative for the Detroit Public Schools. The urban school system is overrun by corruption, violence and incompetence. The teachers union sabotaged classroom instruction and denied schoolchildren an education through an apparent illegal work stoppage. Yet, Washington went ahead and forked over a whopping \$530 million in federal porkulus funds to reward yet more Detroit government school failure and bail out the reckless-spending boobs who mismanaged the DPS budget and engineered a fiscal crisis. The \$49 million technology program distributed some 40,000 new (foreign-made) ASUS netbook computers, plus thousands of printers, scanners and desktop computers to teachers and kids from early childhood through 12th grade.

One teacher was caught late last year trying to pawn his shiny new booty. No doubt, he has company. Nationwide, in both urban and rural school districts, large and small, these technology infusions have turned out to be gesture-driven boondoggles and political payoffs that squander precious educational resources — with little, if any, measurable academic benefits. Mark Lawson, school board president of one of New York state's first districts to put technology directly in students' hands, told *The New York Times* in 2007: "After seven years, there was literally no evidence it had any impact on student achievement — none. The teachers were telling us when there's a one-to-one relationship between the student and the laptop, the box gets in the way. It's a distraction to the educational process."

That about sums up federal intervention in public schooling: It's a taxpayer-subsidized distraction to the local educational process that throttles true competition, rewards failure and mistakes blind government largesse for achievement.

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