



What five things would you do to save public education?

“Commend top teachers who go beyond the regular responsibilities of the school day. Schools need the best, and they need to keep the best.”

Monica M. Sajn
Language Arts Teacher
Scott Middle School
Hammond, Indiana

“Involve students with the community. Whether it’s building Web pages, giving tours for historical visits, or inviting businesses to work with classrooms, don’t close the door!”

Karen Thompson
Instructional Technology Facilitator
Springfield, Illinois

“Create a nationwide 24-hour cable television network that gives English as a second language, literacy, and basic skills instruction.”

Victor I. King
President, Board of Trustees
Glendale Community College
Glendale, California

“Put more emphasis on the arts—not less! The arts are a wonderful tool for teaching the standards. An art-infused curriculum based on project learning and the multiple intelligences is motivating and challenging, and reaches every child.”

Cathie Middleton
Assistant Principal
Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary School
Charleston, South Carolina

“Require all administrators to teach at least one class per day at some level.”

John Stallcup
Founder, APREMAT/USA
Napa, California

“Teaching the guidelines of the academic content standards is a MUST; it’s how it’s done that can be the difference of retention with students. As a music teacher I believe in cultural education through music performance. Students need to be challenged and realize learning can be fun.”

Charles Ferrara
Turpin High School Bands
Teacher, Instrumental Music, Grades 4-12
Forest Hills School District
Cincinnati, Ohio

“Let the children laugh and play more.”

Tonya Anderson
Director of Trinity After School Program
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

“Fund the arts in education. The first programs that are cut when budgets are tight: music and art programs. These programs have the greatest potential to develop dendrites in the brain and a love of learning and of school.”

Jackie H. Daniilidis
Principal, Estelle Elementary School
Jefferson Parish School System
Louisiana

“Make parents more accountable for student attendance, and encourage parents to show respect to the teachers. Unfortunately, when parents don’t find attendance important, then neither do the students. The same goes with respect. Most parents today immediately get involved if a teacher tries to discipline a student but normally feel their child is in the right and the teacher is wrong. This is a big shift from the ’60s and ’70s, when, if you got in trouble at school, you could be sure to get in trouble when you got home. Teachers don’t seem to be viewed as the authority figure that they once were. It is great that parents are more involved, but that involvement should include respect for the teacher’s authority in the classroom. Many parents refuse to believe that their child could do anything wrong.”

Theresa Jackson Pierce
Staff Development/Technology Associate
Microsoft Office 2000 Master Instructor
New Castle Community Schools

“Find more ways to communicate and celebrate the incredible number of things teachers are doing well and are already doing right. Discouraged, battered, and demoralized teachers will severely limit the effects of even the best reform ideas.”

Robert Hermann, Principal
Sonoma Mountain High School
Carpe Diem High School
Petaluma, California

“Do not allow corporate contracts with school districts, e.g., Coke or Pepsi, and do not allow soda or junk food sales. This theory of letting kids ‘choose’ is just plain silly. You wouldn’t expect a child to ‘choose’ between reading and playing video games, would you?”

Kelly Haarmeyer
Parent and California Department of Education Employee
Sacramento, California

“Reduce class sizes! And hire more assistants!”

Lona Sepessy
Substitute Teacher
Shoreline, Washington

“I would increase the number of welcome letters from school to home and keep schools open until 9:00 p.m. Offer classes to parents on parenting and how to help their children in school and in life.”

Mary Dismukes
Technology Teacher
Arizona

“Have a full-time counselor at each school for dealing with emotional problems of students. These problems get in the way of learning.”

Jackie Costanzo
2nd Grade Teacher
San Jose, California

“Involve the community. The African proverb ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ still holds true. Community involvement in the form of volunteers and mentors can go a long way. This is especially true in urban and impoverished environments where children often go unsupervised after school. After-school arts and homework programs, job internships, and community-sponsored all-age events can do a lot to keep children on track and in school, as well as build understanding and camaraderie between generations.”

Sarah McMane
English Teacher
Tappan Zee High School
Orangeburg, New York

“Put some responsibility back on the students and parents! As test scores slide, we teachers bear the blame. In reality, we are dealing with an increasingly apathetic and lazy student body that won’t do the work. If students don’t read the text or the literature, and don’t do the homework, of course their test scores are going to go down. What’s wrong with failing the kids who choose to fail? Our high schools should not be diploma mills. If the student doesn’t graduate, he should have to deal with it, not be babied into passing every year by an administration afraid of lawsuits. It’s ridiculous.”

David Wright
QHHS Drama teacher
AVTA Site Captain
Quartz Hill, California

“Ask network and cable news stations to have educators explain in detail where the education dollars are really spent, and what is really going on in education.”

Margot J. Nitzsche
English and Math Teacher
Indio Middle School
Indio, California

“Create a 1-to-1 computer-to-student and computer-to-teacher ratio.”

Steve Taffee
Director of Technology
Castilleja School
Palo Alto, California

“Make a daily planning period sacrosanct—just as much as core subjects are—at ALL grade levels. If there is an assembly, the teacher gets another period that day for planning. Provide music, art, and PE during the planning periods. If they are not available, the para or assistant teacher should read to the students from appropriate literature.”

Rhonda Browning
Severe Disabilities/Intermediate
New Orleans Public Schools

“I teach art to 450 students, some of whom I see only once per week for 25 minutes, so I find it useful to send out monthly “art newsletters” with general information. I also send out a portfolio/progress report at the end of each quarter with more specific information about individual student progress. I give bonus participation points if this is signed and returned the next day. I’ve found this to be a good way to keep parents informed of their child’s progress. I also try to let parents know if their child’s works are shown on our art Web site.”

Mary Jo Bell
East Carter County R-2 School
Ellsinore, Missouri

“Promote teacher Web sites. My Web site, myschoolonline.com/nh/mrs5st, is very successful. It motivates students to be the best student they can be, and rewards them by posting their names for awards as well as displaying their projects (via digital pictures) on the site. Students can practice current subject matter on the site in the quiz lab, which increases learning and raises grades.”

Wendy Schmid Tetrault
Retired Teacher
Manchester, New Hampshire

“Survey students to find out what their goals are in life and have them go out and find someone doing that thing and work with or observe that person (or group) enough to get an idea of what it takes to do that thing. Example: Wanna be a rap artist? Find a local rapper who is actually earning income (doesn’t matter how much or how little) and find out how he/she rehearses, gets gigs, and chooses material.”

Caralyn Percy
Executive Director
Dianetics Foundation of Inglewood
Los Angeles

“Focus on a positive work environment for teachers. Happy teachers want to come to work and do their best. They create happy, achieving children. Let teachers evaluate principals, and have their evaluations contribute at least 50 percent to the decision about whether the principal retains her job. Raise all pay to the current national average immediately. Favor veterans in pay scales. Create job ladders. Require all teachers to earn an M.Ed. within five years of employment and encourage national certification. Pay for these as well as more advanced degrees up front, not by reimbursement, with the expectation that the teacher will remain as an educator in the state for a number of years.”

Rhonda Browning
Severe Disabilities/Intermediate
New Orleans Public Schools

“Attract more male teachers.”

Dr. Richard Kimball
Professor, University of the West
Rosemead, California

“I would return urban school districts to their owners—the parents—by dividing big districts back into small neighborhood schools where if parents needed to be in touch with their children’s teachers, they could walk to the school building. Also, teachers and administrators could make home visits to ensure that the lines of communication remain open.”

Eva O’Mara
Principal
Highland Drive Elementary School
Brecksville, Ohio

“Increase beginning teacher salaries so that the most able scholars are attracted to the profession. Annual increases would be based on merit, as determined in annual reviews of effectiveness, not on longevity.”

David W. Kramer, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology
Ohio State University at Mansfield

“Reduce the size of schools and number of students in the classroom, particularly at the secondary level. A high school of 4,500 teenagers in overcrowded classes of 40+ students is not conducive to the nurturing of learning.”

Mary B. Stephens
LD Specialist, DSPS
School of Continuing Education, Santa Ana College
California

“Make school year-round, with no break of more than two weeks.”

Mark Westerfield
Alternative Program Coordinator
Collins Alternative Programs
White River School District

“The school calendar is a reflection of times past when students were needed to plow the fields and harvest the crops. Students lose valuable educational concepts over the months of summer. It may be dangerous and often a financial liability for families to have students unsupervised for the weeks of summer. Year-round calendars may be more appropriate to the modern student, with a four-quarter option aligned with institutions of higher education to allow taking advanced courses and to encourage inter-age activities and recreational or educational opportunities.”

Carol N. McKegney, M.Ed.
Resource Specialist
San Antonio High School
Petaluma, California

“National compulsory education to age 16 only. Then an informed, counseled choice would be made: two years of college prep, two years of vocational ed, or two years of conscripted public service.”

John Lupini
Principal
Los Banos Unified School District
Los Banos, California

“We have seen increasing and unfortunate denigration of the educational establishment, with recurrent calls for radical educational ‘reform.’ No Child Left Behind is an example of a politically based pitch for corporation-driven educational reform as an alternative to public education. It is unrealistic to expect widespread or rapid change in educational practice without parallel steps at preserving the best of current educational practice and increasing respect and remuneration allocated to teachers and practitioners.

“We must somehow work with the best professionals who are in the schools and gradually inculcate openness to new values, techniques, and pedagogical approaches. New technology approaches are integral to such efforts, especially those that can facilitate project and collaborative learning approaches, where teacher/student roles are flexible and dynamically reversible.

“I suggest a Carnegie Corporation-funded study prepared by a well-selected cadre of educational researchers and practitioners. They would develop an agenda process for public education in our increasingly diversified society. Such a study might also proscribe new options and recommendations for participation of parents, retirees, and senior citizens as tutors, coaches, counselors, and mentors for students and possibly teachers.

“The study would lead to pilot programs established in different geographic, ethnic, and economic sectors in order to test the fruitfulness of the new approaches.

“Federal funding would have to be diverted from bellicose foreign military adventures for this purpose.”

Robert S. Runyon
Literary Advocate and Promoter
Omaha, Nebraska

“Design smaller high schools to give individual students ‘a name with a face.’ They are more than a number. School size can be determined upon a formula combining financial efficiency and academic achievement. Student-to-teacher ratio between 18:1 to 22:1 and no class over 30. Size based upon reliable research.”

Larry Kromann, Ed.D.
Principal, Napa Christian

“Innovative building use/design. Too many buildings exist that don’t meet the needs of today’s students and teachers. Projects need space and flexibility; people need comfortable furnishings and spaces.”

Turtle Moore
Kindergarten Teacher, Oakland Elementary
McDonough, Georgia

“Open high schools later in the day than elementary schools. Repeated research studies have shown that this would improve attendance rates and reduce after-school mischief, thereby increasing productivity and completion rates.”

Essie East
Reading and English Teacher
Nimitz High School
Houston, Texas

“Ban creation science (intelligent design, etc.), which is the antithesis of public education. These are faith-based ideas/subjects that should be taught in a purely religious environment, not in public schools.”

Billy E. Smith
North Harris Montgomery Community College District
The Woodlands, Texas

“We need better teacher training. University professors need to get off their high horses and come back to public education and see what we really have to deal with. Why should a college professor put so much emphasis on lesson plans and not teach prospective teachers how to deal with a rowdy, if not dangerous, student? What do you do when the student openly defies you? Our new teachers are being trained for classes in the 1960s, ’70s, even the ’80s. We have totally different students who have been exposed to so many different things. Universities and colleges need to keep up and quit sending us teachers who don’t know what is going on. Too many new teachers leave the profession because of this—and NO, not all people can teach.”

Theresa McAbee
Social Studies Teacher
Lewis County High School
Weston, West Virginia

“Ongoing mentorships for ALL teachers to refine instruction, and paid summer institutions for them to plan together with cross-curricular colleagues for the following school year.”

Ginny Gallagher LaRowe
Literacy Administrator
Gompers High School
San Diego City Schools

“Limit K-6 classrooms to a uniform 25 students per teacher.”

Lynn Jones
4th Grade Teacher
Garden Grove, California

“Use heterogeneous grouping (in small classes) at the elementary level and homogeneous grouping at the secondary level. This is being done more and more as research seems to indicate this is the best mix for learning. It is patently unfair to secondary students to make them progress at a faster or slower rate than they are able and ridiculous to expect a subject teacher to develop three or four lesson plans for a single class of mixed-ability students.”

Barbara Paciotti
Library Teacher
Barbara Bush Middle School, C-FB ISD
Irving, Texas

“Require every member of Congress with school-age children to send them to public school.”

Nicholas D. Caruso, Jr.
Senior Staff Associate for Field Services
Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

“Expose preservice teachers to only accomplished teacher leaders in their field experiences and internships.”

Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach
Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Virginia Beach, Virginia

“As a professional in the field of education for 20 years, I have seen many cyclical changes occur in the field of public education, some good and some bad. What I currently believe would be most useful in the long term to successfully meet the needs of all students would be to instruct all teachers, both pre- and in-service teachers, in how to differentiate instruction to better facilitate learning. I would create ongoing professional development for teachers rather than periodic one-time workshops. I would provide mentors for all levels of teachers for support and encouragement, and to increase retention. I would mandate standardized tests only for those for whom the test was normed against and mandate curriculum-based assessments for everyone. My last change would be to increase the salaries of all educators in order to infuse the public education system with people who have the greatest educational skills and background in content-area knowledge.”

Barbara Schwartz-Bechet, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Graduate Special Education
Bowie State University/University System of Maryland

“Reward teachers who opt to teach in underperforming schools.”

Steve Taffee
Director of Technology
Castilleja School
Palo Alto, California

“Have all teachers put homework assignments on the Internet so that parents can monitor the work expectations of their children (and reinforce them).”

Victor I. King
President, Board of Trustees
Glendale Community College
Glendale, California

“Increase funding for schools. At present most corporations are required to make grants to nonprofit corporations, and they often do so for educational purposes. Pass laws that would allow corporate giving to go directly to schools instead of the current practice requiring schools to apply for those grants, which is time-consuming for school administrators and brings in funds only in small amounts, \$1,000 to \$5,000.”

Dennis Deliman
Rolling Hills Charter School
Paulden, Arizona

“High school graduation should not be a right but rather an accomplishment. Those who do not want to conform to the requirements of academic success, or sadly, do not have the innate skills, should not be getting a high school diploma. Further, those who lack the skills should not expect that there is a place in higher education for them to absorb more tax dollars.”

Charlie Hoff, President
Federal Way School Board

“My biggest pet peeve has been the teacher’s focus on what’s wrong with the student and how to fix it versus what are the student’s natural abilities, talents, and interests and how to enhance them. In a discussion with my 5-year-old son’s teacher, I heard all the things he couldn’t do. When I asked her what he *could* do well and enjoyed, she gave me a strange look like ‘you have to be kidding’ and said, ‘Well, I guess he’s good at computers and math.’ Develop the teachers to help develop the potential of each student versus forcing them to fit into the ‘perfect student’ mold.”

Celia Szelwach, President
Creative Collaborations Consulting Inc.
Bradenton, Florida

“1) Fund it. Why are we trying to run school districts on a shoestring budget? If we really want all kids to get to a standard level, we need to make sure the ‘have-nots’ get what they need to make progress. If you are a political candidate claiming to be for education, if you are a baby boomer and want good health care, if you are a parent or grandparent and want the best for your children—then put your money/votes where your mouth is!

2) Improve facilities. There are schools out there that opened in the 1920s and they’ve got the infrastructure to prove it. We wouldn’t run a business that way, would we? There should be minimum standards for school buildings and their capacities to accommodate technology, and states should fund the renovations.

3) Overcome the ‘fear factor.’ Obtain more technology for instruction and teach teachers how to use it instructionally.”

Clay Wright, Principal
Graham, Texas

“I don’t advocate sudden federalization of our education system. Yet the total balkanization of education has failed. High-stakes testing is a poor solution to this problem. The issue here is finding a way to enforce widespread best practices without destroying innovation. Constant reevaluation of local vs. district vs. state vs. federal control of each aspect of the system by independent evaluators will help.”

Harry Keller
President
ParaComp Inc.

“Smaller class size
Smaller class size
Smaller class size
Smaller class size
Smaller class size”

Julie Spradley
Assistant Director of Financial Management
University of Denver Sturm College of Law
Denver, Colorado

“(1) Reduce the compulsory segment of ‘public education’ to nine years. Our children are being taught so slowly that we lose their attention—a major contributor to a 25–35 percent attrition rate. (2) Focus on depth of learning rather than width. Children are forced to learn material that will NEVER be used outside of school by 95 percent of the students rather than encouraged to pursue an in-depth exploration of the subjects used by everyone. (3) Replace high school with technology/career/college-prep academies, mostly privately funded, for those individuals who want to continue their education after their compulsories are completed. Some young adults will move directly into the workforce through contacts. Other ‘graduates’ must decide what is best for them and choose the appropriate path.”

Steve Smiley
Computer Science/Technology Applications
Seguin High School
Arlington ISD, Texas

“How to save public education? Declare it an enemy of the state and throw money at it just like we are doing in Iraq. Lower the class sizes and pay competitive salaries. The insurgents (private schools) will try to sabotage the effort, but in the end, public education will prosper and prevail. Current teachers and methodology are sufficient to do the job if the environment is supportive and conducive to learning.”

Albert Alfasso
Teacher
Northridge, California

“1) What five things are needed to save public education? I am not sure that is the question we should be asking. In fact, isn't public education working quite well? Maybe the question should be, How we can support, recognize, and celebrate public education? I think the new question should be, What five things could we do as Americans to help support public education?”

2) Consider what public education would be like if it were privatized. Ask legislators how they could develop policy that is purposeful, respectful, timely, and funded, before passing legislation. Five let the president know what you think about education after a real look at what is truly going on each and every day in our schools.”

Bob Winter
Assistant Principal
Pioneer Elementary School
Parker, Colorado

“Avoid the ‘broken windows’ phenomenon. School maintenance programs should quickly and efficiently remove or repair unsightly graffiti, vandalism, and decay. This would forestall both more expensive fixes down the road and a decay in respect for and enjoyment of the institution.”

John Hetts
Assistant Professor
Washington University
St. Louis

“What’s all the pressure for EVERY kid to go to college? Academia is NOT for everyone. Some people just want to fix cars or write code, or even learn plumbing! Why the push for the UC system? Put back vocational education (or else, someday, there will be NOBODY to fix your car or your toilet!).”

Kelly Haarmeyer
Parent and California Department of Education Employee
Sacramento, California

“I would allow the teachers, those trained in curriculum and methods and not the political bureaucrats, to choose the curriculum which is to be taught in the public schools. I would give the teachers much more input in running the school.”

Mary Young
Teacher
Sacramento City Unified School District

“1) Make parents more accountable for their children—accountable for their behavior, for the school property they are lent, for doing their homework, for being in school, and for their learning. Many parents demand that schools be made accountable for the behavior of students, yet these same parents refuse to grant these institutions the necessary authority or to reinforce and support any disciplinary actions taken by schools.

2) Let the teachers teach. About eight years ago, my mother retired from almost 30 years of teaching elementary school reading. Her normal teaching day consisted of spending 20 minutes of each 50-minute 'hour' filling out required forms and other paperwork. Conservatively subtract another ten minutes from each hour for dealing with behavioral problems, and that leaves just 20 minutes for teaching and learning. What kind of productivity could your business get from its employees if it required them to spend more than half their time doing something other than their jobs?"

Professor Mike Williams, Ed.S.
New Mexico Junior College
Hobbs, New Mexico

"Obviously, money...which could come from luxury taxes, liquor taxes—even a penny tax on downloaded songs, CD sales, movie rentals, or movie tickets...and speaking of tickets, all proceeds from speeding in school zones should go to schools."

Judd Shapiro
English Department Chair
Gulliver Schools
Miami, Florida

"I believe that we sometimes teach the wrong things based on the right motives. The general dictum is that we send our kids to college so they can get good, high-paying technical jobs. In fact, we send kids to college to learn to think—everything else is an excuse."

Dr. Raymond Costa
Director of Business
Beach Park School District #3
Beach Park, Illinois

"This question is inherently flawed because it does not say *why* education needs saving or (if it in fact does need saving) from what. Posing this kind of question suggests to readers that all public education is either flawed, failed, doomed, in crisis, at risk, etc., without demonstrating that it is. Are there some problems with public education? Sure. But not all of public education is going to hell in a hand basket the way this question suggests it is. If all of public education needs saving, the question should state specifically *what* it is about public education that needs saving."

Eric J. Anctil, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology
Washington State University

"Fail students. This sounds very harsh. However, in some school districts, teachers are not allowed to fail students. What message does this send? Students and parents need to know that failure is a real possibility if the work is not completed in an appropriate manner. Sometimes, the kindest grade to award is an F."

Dr. Victoria E. McLure
Professor of English
South Plains College
Levelland, Texas

“We cannot expect students to respect their teachers when it is so obvious that, as a society, we do not. It is difficult to attract the best and brightest to a field so badly maligned and so poorly recompensed. Many teachers are passionate advocates for children, and their altruism shines; however, some are just passing time in a field that rewards longevity over creativity.”

Carol N. McKegney, M.Ed.
Resource Specialist
San Antonio High School
Petaluma, California

“1) I would put a referendum on the ballot in every state asking whether we really want to have a public education system any longer. And if so, what should it look like? It seems to me that we are really deciding by not deciding that we no longer hold a free and equal education for all citizens as one of our core values. So let’s give up and put our energies into something else if education isn’t important. Then the people who value it can pay for it and the marketplace can determine what is a successful school.

2) I would take the profit out of textbooks. Textbook publishing is a scam perpetrated on school districts and students. Education should not be done to make a profit for anyone, as long as we are still claiming to offer all citizens access to free public education.”

Sandra Rotenberg
Librarian
Solano Community College
Fairfield, California

“Give teachers only one job: to teach (no more than four classes a day). Hire others to coach, tutor, etc. Give teachers a budget each year that allows them to decide what to buy for their students/classroom. Require a small percentage of this to go toward meaningful professional development—again, allowing them to decide which workshop or class would benefit them the best. Provide an individualized professional development plan for each teacher, to which they have given input. For new teachers, this plan would place them with a suitable mentor teacher and plenty of planning time.”

Chelsy Hooper
Computer Teacher
Nashville, Tennessee

“Make education meaningful. Tap into students’ prior knowledge and experiences so that they feel as though they want to learn the content. Make education authentic so that content is relevant and transferable to real life. Students should feel as though they need to learn it. Make education equitable. Give the same quality of education to all students regardless of income status/geographic location. Make education adaptable. Schools should be proactive, geared up for cultural change before change is necessary. Properly fund education so that schools have the money needed to bring content to students.”

Jeff Giddens
Educational Innovator in Residence
First District RESA Educational Technology Training Center
Brooklet, Georgia

“Follow the example of the banks during the Depression. Close everything down and reopen with the caveat that administrators run the school (in collaboration with) the teachers who teach (in collaboration with) the parents who support the educational needs of their children. Give the schools back to the professionals and demand (don’t ask for) parent cooperation. Public education in the 21st century requires teamwork, and that includes more than the teacher. Parents can always send their children to other schools. Public schools need to be more competitive (think bottom-line business mentality) and build a better mousetrap or at least a better environment in which learning can take place.”

Judyth Lessee
Library Manager
Catalina High Magnet School
Tucson, Arizona

“SAVE public education?! It may need help and improvement, and maybe some buildings or districts are really in trouble, but overall, people want and support their public schools in this country. PLEASE think about changing the wording of that question. Wording it that way is an insult to the teachers, students, and their families who make our public schools great.”

Pamela T. Nichols
Director of Communications
Delaware State Education Association
Dover, Delaware

“1. Raise more revenue. Although money is not the solution to all of our problems, it costs more than \$8,000 a year to hire and retain skilled, qualified teachers and pay for all of the other elements in a quality education.

2. Equitably distribute resources. Make sure that the students with the highest needs receive the most resources. Students from poor black and brown families that speak a language other than English at home should have the best facilities, the most highly skilled teachers, all the necessary supplies, and the best curriculum and textbooks.

3. Work toward deinstitutionalizing racism in public schools. Schools have been failing our black and brown children for dozens of years. We need to stop making excuses and find ways to change our schools to really meet the needs of all children.”

Bruce Simon
Washington Elementary School
Berkeley, California

“Provide high-quality professional development for all teachers—veteran and new. Build time within the school day, along with compensation, for teachers to engage in reflective dialogue, develop cycles of inquiry centered on studying a problem and working toward a solution, and learn how to compile and use data to improve teacher practice and student performance. Demand that all school administrators improve their management skills by taking courses equivalent to management coursework required of those in private industry (e.g., budgeting and accounting, personnel). Public education is a business, and it needs to be managed that way. We should NOT be overspending our budgets, and when faced with a budgetary crisis, should have the tools and training we need to determine where the problem is and how we can fix it. Once we have leveled the playing field for teacher pay and benefits, THEN implement a bonus plan to encourage teachers to go above and beyond the call of duty. As it is now, many of us go above and beyond the call of duty only because of our dedication to our work, and it is difficult to bear the criticism of the public and our government officials when we are already doing as much as we can.”

Yvonne Moulton
English Teacher
Thornton Junior High School
Fremont, California

“1. I would revamp the leadership so that those in leadership positions actually are good leaders.

2. I would have the federal government fund education more fully. It should be expensive to government and free to the people. Just like the military.

3. I would have the teacher unions turn more toward being teacher associations, where they monitor the profession and sanction those not fulfilling their professional duties.

4. I would have teachers coming in to the profession better trained, with a system of internships, much like doctors and other professionals, before being allowed to handle the classroom alone.”

Alisa Hunt
Graduate Student
San Diego

“1. Restructure the Department of Education so that educators are actually running the program, instead of politicians who only ‘know of’ teachers.

2. Give teachers more legal support. Right now they are sitting targets for whoever decides to take a shot. Allow teachers to do their job, and quit trying to ‘fix’ the teachers...they aren’t broken! There are hundreds of in-service programs for teachers. Many of them are wonderful, but it often appears as if the administration were looking for a quick fix to problems beyond its control. It sends teachers to get ‘fixed,’ when in reality, the problem lies elsewhere.”

Melanie Hendrix
4th Grade Teacher
Hawthorne Elementary
Hampton, Georgia

“We know that different students need different amounts of time to learn things. To save public education, we must help school districts transform themselves from a system that forces some students to move on before they have reached the attainments and holds other students back until the class is ‘ready,’ to a system that allows every student as much time as needed to reach each attainment. The transformation process must be districtwide and must focus on helping all stakeholders to evolve their mental models about what education should be like by engaging them in an ‘ideal design’ process. This kind of process has been under way and under study for several years in the Decatur school district in Indianapolis, with facilitation from Indiana University (see www.indiana.edu/~syschang/decatdur/index.html).”

Charles M. Reigeluth
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

“First I would proclaim myself Queen of Education with an annual operating budget of \$1 billion. I understand that money does not solve all problems but it’s a good start.

1) I’d change the school day to 9:00 to 4:00. Before and after care would be from 8 until 7 and free of charge. However, families would have to be approved on a case-by-case basis to get both. Every child would receive a free breakfast, lunch, and snack. Instructional time would end at 1:00. Classroom teachers would then have planning time and professional development and a decent lunch hour. After lunch and recess, students would participate in special classes including art, music (vocal and instrumental), physical education, foreign language, and character education (that includes team building, peer mediation, anger management, and conflict resolution). These activities would be carried out by special teachers who had their planning period and professional development in the mornings. There would be a cadre of paraprofessionals for lunch and recess duty.

2) Every school in this nation would be entitled to a makeover. No more dingy, dank, and dark restrooms and faulty plumbing. Full-spectrum lights. Large windows that open and close. State-of-the-art play areas with age-appropriate equipment for all children, from tiny 3-year-olds in pre-kindergarten to sixth graders who at age 12 are five feet eight inches tall and 170 pounds. Gardens with benches and observation booths.

3) Instructional and behavioral professionals and paraprofessionals. An aide in every classroom. A supernanny in every school. High-caliber workshops and tuition assistance.

4) Each member of the school staff, from the principal to the janitor to the lunch server to the nurse, would get professional development and a mini grant of \$1,000 that could be carried over for up to three years. Each would design a project to benefit the school from buying books to children to purchasing environmentally friendly cleaning supplies or chalk.”

Seledia Shepherd
Parent Volunteer
Amidon Elementary School
Washington, D.C.