

Student Town Hall Questions for Senator Cassidy

1. Education gaps have only become more prevalent post-COVID-19. These gaps are even more visible across economic and racial lines. Schools in majority minority populations schools are less equipped, understaffed, and unfunded. These differences are remnants of segregation and how African-American schools were underfunded by the southern state governments. Considering the disproportionate impact COVID has had on communities of color, how do you plan on working with the current administration to improve this gap and what do you feel should be done?
2. Technology has become increasingly important with virtual learning. Many of the current laptops we have are lacking or damaged and we have received very few new ones recently. What are your plans to fully fund schools for the technology necessary in a heavily online environment and to be globally competitive?
3. How will the federal government support and fund professional development for teachers to learn more about the technology that we rely on so heavily?
4. Throughout the pandemic we've seen an increase in online/hybrid learning, and cancellation of social events. Combine this with the fact that the workload has not decreased, this has led to an increase in mental health issues among teens. According to healthline, one in three teens during this pandemic meets the requirement for anxiety disorders. It is not a secret that student mental health is struggling, both in and out of this pandemic. How will the government address the mental health issues of this generation of teens and would you be willing to support increased funding to go towards expanded mental health counseling in schools?
5. Universities typically look for well rounded students with a high GPA and high standardized test scores. With the widespread decline in student grades and test scores, how will college admittance be tailored or accommodating of the unique challenges caused by the impacts of the pandemic? Will the government encourage colleges to look at holistic admissions?
6. Since the school year ended short and education gaps have occurred, students have been pushed ahead in their academic journey, with the gaps still present. How will these education gaps be improved when the child is just being pushed ahead academically? What do we do for students in areas with no internet connection - force them to retake their school year or do we allow them to pass anyway?
7. How can we support the students who are failing or close to failing due to virtual learning and/or an inconsistent educational environment? For students that are failing, what programs and grants can be put in place to allow them to catch up with their peers?
8. Teachers have consistently worked for their students throughout this entire pandemic, and having to teach both virtual and in-person students can be incredibly difficult. What are your plans to compensate them for their work and to keep them encouraged and motivated to continue teaching us in the new virtual learning environment?

9. Since the United States was caught unaware when the COVID-19 virus hit, and viruses like this have the potential to evolve with increasing frequency, what plans or infrastructure can be implemented to prevent such a complete shut-down and make sure we are better prepared to handle these types of situations in the future? Do you have a plan to deal with these potential outbreaks?
10. Would you be willing to open up illegal industries, such as marijuana, to boost revenue for teacher pay raises, school funding, or mental health issues?
11. I am in entirely advanced and accelerated classes, but AP classes can be very expensive. At this point in my education, there is no class available for me in multiple categories that are not AP, and AP requires money. How can we make school more affordable for students in accelerated courses?
12. At what point will a covid vaccination be mandatory for school attendance. How will vaccines be handled in terms of masks? Also, if vaccines are to be made mandatory, how will you account for religious beliefs for the vaccine given that one very accessible vaccine is constructed of materials that are unacceptable to many religions?
13. COVID created virtual learning is especially difficult for students with learning disabilities such as ADHD and Dyslexia. When all of our instruction is the same and has extremely limited interaction, How can we revise the school system to be more inviting to today's work standards? In schools, we are taught in a way that reflects the factory work setting but in today's work landscape, the factory mindset is less and less valuable. So how can we revise the school system to match today's workplaces?