



Whiteboard
Advisors

Insider Insights: Chicago Teachers Union
Strike & The First Presidential Debate
October 8, 2012

Why Education Insider

We harness the wisdom of well-connected influentials to provide insights and predict policy outcomes for stakeholders in the education debate.

The Value

Whiteboard Advisors is a policy-oriented consulting practice. We provide proprietary research and strategic support to investors and philanthropic donors, government leaders and entrepreneurs who seek unparalleled understanding of the education policy and business environment.

Education Insider helps those who need quality information to make high-stakes decisions about the direction of federal policy. Education Insider combines the wisdom of informed crowds with expert analysis to offer unparalleled information, analysis, and forecasting on a range of federal education policy issues and likely outcomes.

Education Insider conducts an anonymous survey of a **small group of key education influentials** (policymakers, thought leaders, and association heads) to get their thoughts and commentary about the context of the current debate and possible outcomes. This helps surface the underlying dynamics that can affect the trajectory of policies, positively or negatively, and go deeper than the conventional wisdom and rhetoric.

Why Education Insider



The Process

Education Insider is a monthly report and webinar that cuts through the noise and provides real-time insights on national education policy trends, debates, and issues—from the handful of decision makers that are really driving the process. We combine a survey of key education influencers with our own analysis to provide a unique perspective on the current state of debate.

Who Are The Insiders?

Influential leaders who are shaping federal education reform, including individuals who have or are currently serving as key policy and political “insiders,” such as:

- Current and former White House and U.S. Department of Education leaders
- Current and former Congressional staff
- State education leaders including state school chiefs and former governors
- Leaders of major education organizations, think tanks and other key influentials

Executive Summary

This survey provides a brief recap of the first Presidential debate, as well as insights on the Chicago Teachers Union Strike.

Key highlights include:

- ✓ 62% of Insiders believe that the union won the strike.
- ✓ Insiders gave Governor Romney a solid B for his education-focused debate comments, while President Obama received a C.
- ✓ While 66% of Insiders deemed Governor Romney's comments on education more effective, many indicated that it was closer to a tie than a clear win.



Photo: Craig F. Walker, [The Denver Post](#)

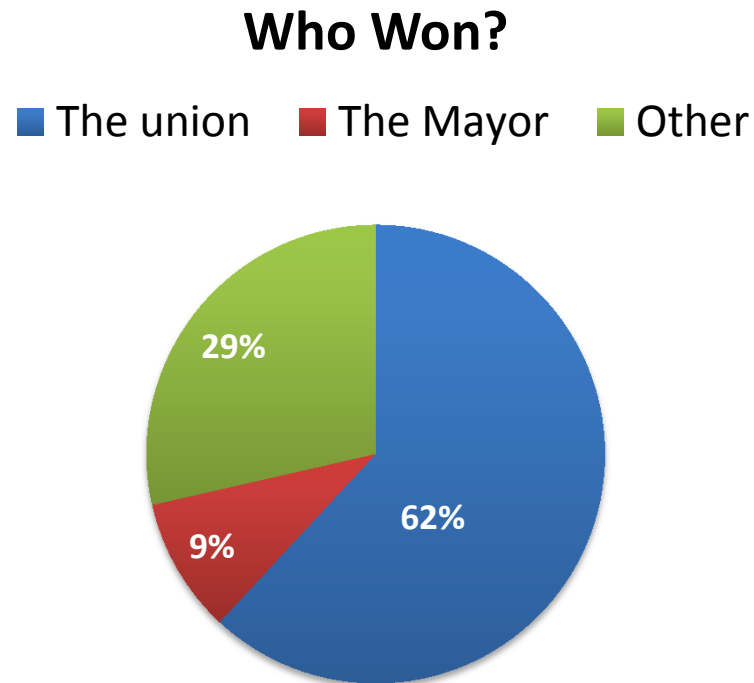
Table of Contents

- ◆ CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION STRIKE 6
- ◆ FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 12

Who Won and Lost in the Chicago Teachers Union Strike?

Insiders overwhelmingly feel that the union clearly won the CTU strike.

Nearly 30% of Insiders felt that parents and students were the ones who really lost.



Question: Who won and lost in the Chicago teacher strike? Why?

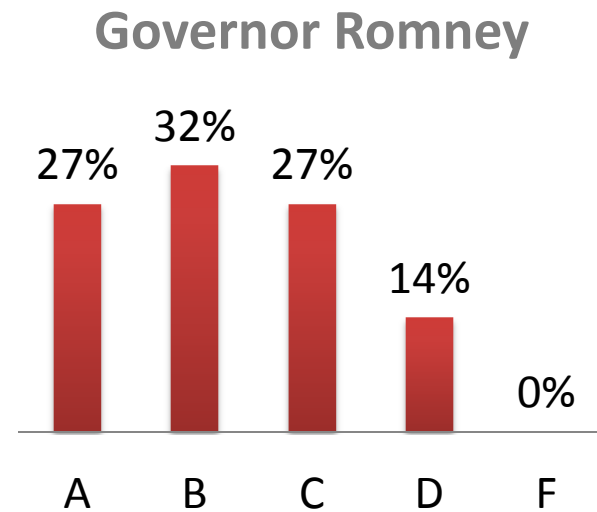
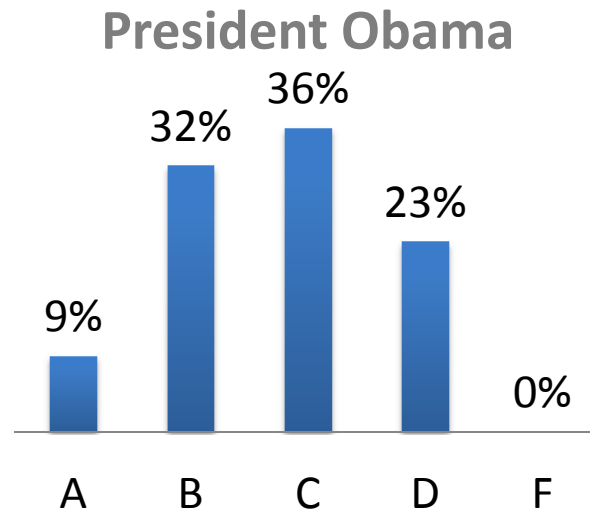
Insider Insight: Who Won and Lost in the Chicago Teachers Union Strike?

Why?

- “When the union goes on tour to other cities to teach other unions how to bargain, you know they won.”
- “[Union members] were able to hold the line locally, and get almost all they wanted.”
- “The details on the contract are not favorable to the city. They preserved one area of authority—hiring in the event of layoffs but gave away pretty much everything else. **An embarrassment.**”
- “**CTU won the battle of public perception. While the mayor ultimately got what he wanted, the union stood up to him and appeared to be the public winner.**”
- “It’s pretty obvious. The union prevailed on a great many more of the points in contention than did the mayor—and may **bankrupt the city in the process.**”
- “**No real victory for reform.** The union knew the mayor’s weakness—having a huge conflagration in the middle of his pal’s presidential campaign—and picked him apart because of the vulnerability.”
- “On substance, especially evaluation, it was mostly a win.”
- “Strikes are rarely win/lose propositions. **What is remarkable is how predictable the outcome was based on where the parties were positioned in June.** It was about the only settlement imaginable.”

Grading the Candidates' Responses on Education at the First Presidential Debate, October 3, 2012

Insiders gave Romney the edge in terms of addressing education in the first debate.



Question: Based on the first Presidential Debate, held last night, please grade the candidates on their responses/comments on education?

Insider Insight: Grading the Candidates

Why?

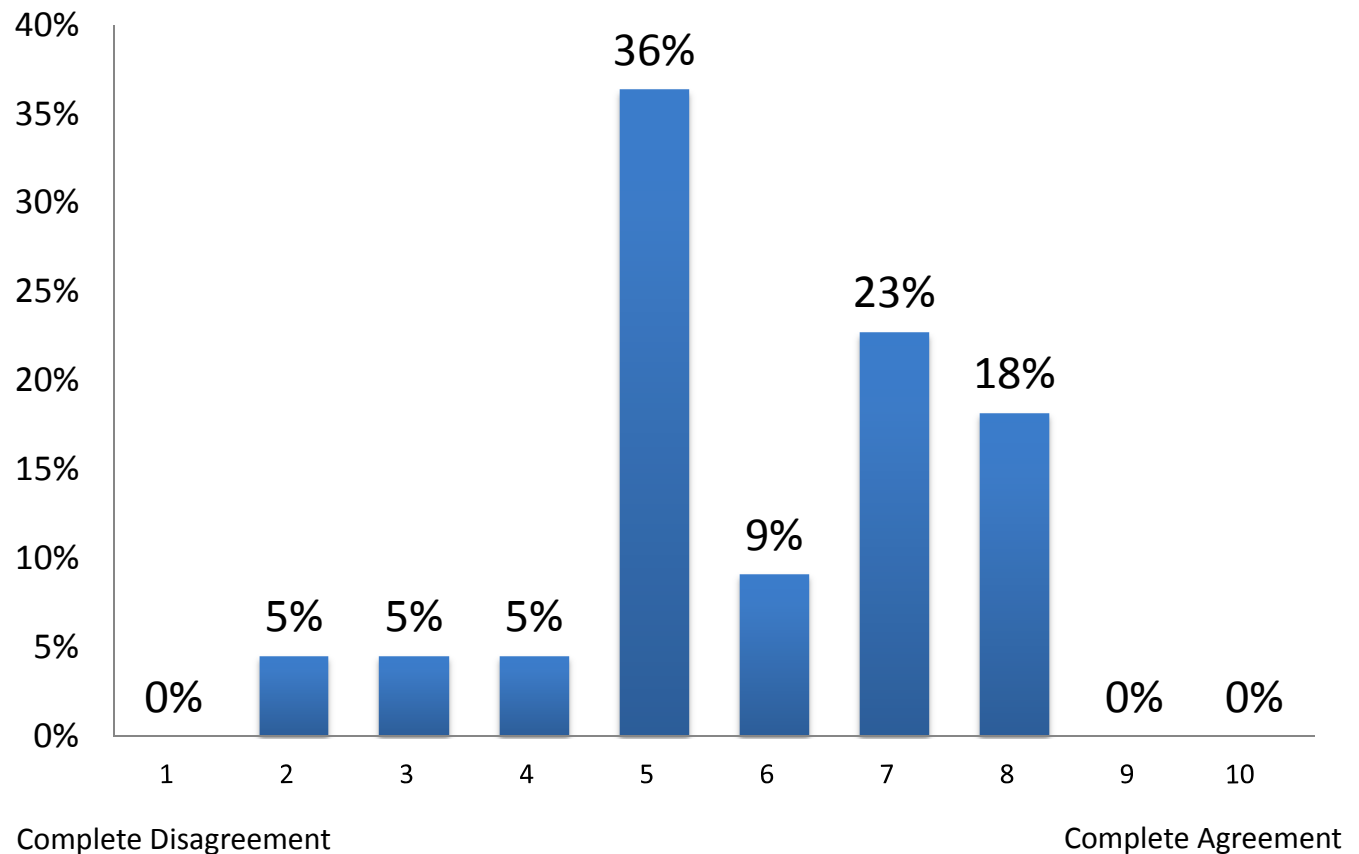
- “Romney had specifics, supported issues he shared with Obama. Obama turned what could have been opportunity into an argument for more money period, and a failed accusation that Romney wanted to reduce funding. It was a shallow defense of what is actually solid policy.”
- “Romney was strong, but could not articulate the role of the federal government in education.”
- “Obama was terrible in the debate. Education was one of his high points, sadly. But he over claims results and underestimates the hole he’s dug for himself policy-wise going forward, especially with the waivers.”
- “Mixed bag for both. Obama continues to cite RttT and his STEM teacher plans as his success/plan for the future without really being challenged on how either will be funded and the money that might be diverted from other priority spending, such as Title I, Part B, etc. Romney, for obvious political reasons, won’t take the bait on the hiring teachers issue, but has made some measured statements about RttT and how effective it actually is proving.”
- “Title I vouchers, Mr. Governor? Please. And also lying about not cutting education funding. If the Romney-Ryan budget is just that, education funding gets cut.”



Candidates' Alignment on Education Policy

Education may be the one area where there is truly bipartisan agreement.

Insiders generally believe that the two candidates are not too distant on education policy.



President Obama and Governor Romney discussed their similarities and differences on education last night. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being complete agreement and 1 being complete disagreement, how much do the candidates actually agree on education policy?

Insider Insight: How Much do the Candidates Really Agree on Education?

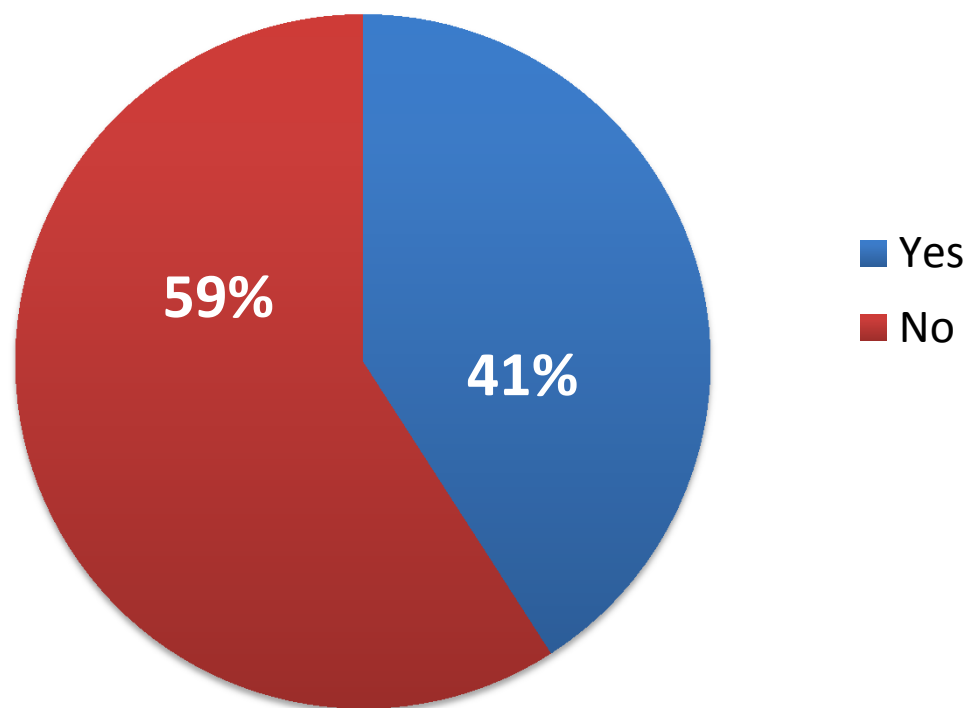
Why?

- “Higher ed seems to be the big difference—on K-12 different priorities but both willing to use the federal role a lot.”
- “It’s hard to tell how ‘big thinking’ Romney is on education. If he’s truly intent on being a transformative president who challenges notions about federalism, borrowed spending, etc., he might be very different than Obama, and truly consolidate Dept. of Ed. or block grant federal spending (imagining all of that could pass Congress). On the other hand, if he turns out to be a regular pol accepting policies only so far as they can be publicly supported, I can envision him maintaining current spending and even allowing a compromise ESEA reauthorization (imagining even further that could happen in the next four years) that authorizes i3, Promise Neighborhoods, and Race to the Top as long as it generally reduces the federal role in accountability, assessments, and standards.”
- “Very similar, only big difference would be the voucher program Romney is claiming will be part of his agenda.”
- “I think there is actually a high degree of similarity. I think the biggest difference is their positions on vouchers.”
- “Big differences are vouchers, spending levels and maybe Common Core.”

Governor Romney and Education Budget Cuts

While Governor Romney seemed to pledge to protect education from budget cuts if he is elected, Insiders do not believe he would actually be able to maintain this promise.

Given the fiscal challenges facing the government is this pledge possible to maintain?



Question: Governor Romney seemed to pledge to protect education from budget cuts under his administration. Given the fiscal challenges facing the government is this pledge possible to maintain?

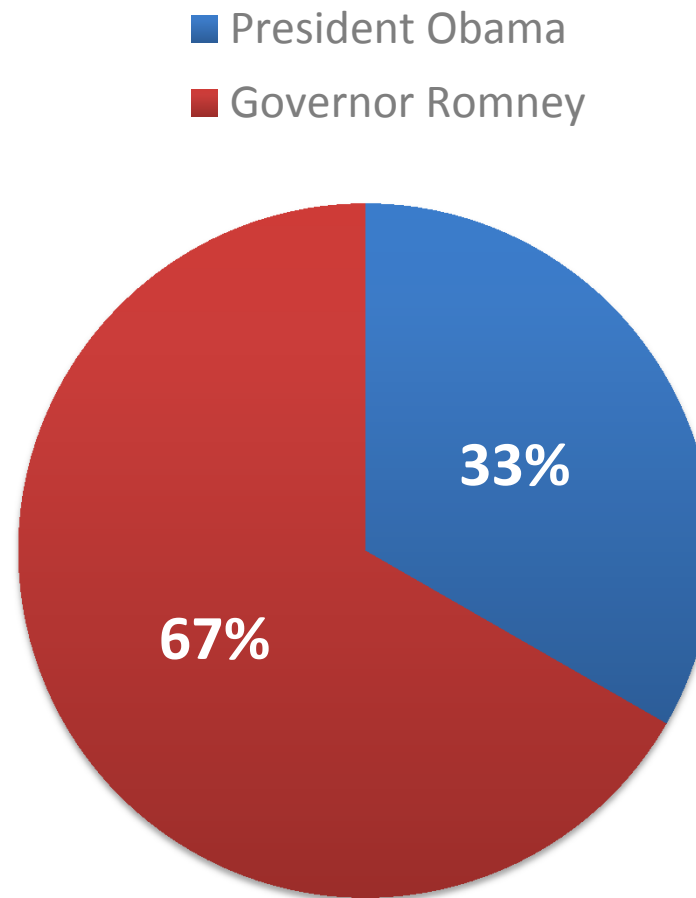
Insider Insight: Governor Romney and Education Budget Cuts

Why?

- “Overall spending levels he can protect, but he’ll have to move a lot of things around. Some Pell reform would free up some dollars.”
- “It’s POSSIBLE to maintain [current funding levels] but assuming Romney is serious about tackling the deficit, and considering the fact that ‘discretionary’ spending on social programs is a lot easier to cut than entitlements (or, in Romney’s case, Defense) I think it’s highly unlikely that education will be spared.”
- **“BUT there won’t be increases. That’s the key.”**
- “No deficit hawk can credibly claim that every single spending item isn’t ripe to be trimmed, especially ED which has seen significant growth over the past 10 years. **Either he misspoke, went into the debate prepared to say whatever he needed to, or simply has changed his mind**, the idea that any non-defense, discretionary spending item can automatically be exempt is foolish.”
- “Budgets are decisions about where to invest—we could easily make the decision that education is the place to invest. I’m not sure Romney would make such a decision, but it could be done.”

Who Had the More Effective Message on Education?

Insiders believe that Governor Romney had the more effective message on education during the first debate.



Question: Who had the more effective message on education last night, President Obama or Governor Romney? Why?

Insider Insight: Who Had the More Effective Message on Education?

Why?

- “**Gov. Romney—but barely**, I don’t think either was very compelling on this topic.”
- “Like the debate overall, Romney was just crisper.”
- “Voters want to believe they have choices. Romney offered that.”
- “More experience personally in getting student gains (not just passing policies). choice and busting up the status quo are more robust than bragging on a government program (RttT).”
- “**I’d actually say it was a draw**. In the end that is to Romney’s benefit since he has the politically tougher argument to make and Obama has the more politically favorable history to share.”
- “**Obama was clearer and Romney focused on vouchers.**”
- “It was a **wash**. No one really scored on education.”

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