

Architectural blueprints with various colored lines (red, blue, green, purple) and text labels like 'W', 'R', 'NORTH', and '100'.

College- and Career-Ready Standards and Assessments



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION





PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Every child in America deserves a world-class education.

Today, more than ever, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success. America was once the best educated nation in the world. A generation ago, we led all nations in college completion, but today, 10 countries have passed us. It is not that their students are smarter than ours. It is that these countries are being smarter about how to educate their students. And the countries that out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow.

We must do better. Together, we must achieve a new goal, that by 2020, the United States will once again lead the world in college completion. We must raise the expectations for our students, for our schools, and for ourselves—this must be a national priority. We must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Barack Obama". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.



College- and Career-Ready

Standards and Assessments

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Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

To help achieve President Obama's stated goal for the country of ensuring that all students are ready for college and careers when they graduate from high school, the administration has designed a blueprint for a reenvisioned federal role in education through the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. The new *ESEA* will call for

- ▶ **Raising standards for all students in English language arts and mathematics;**
- ▶ **Developing better assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards; and**
- ▶ **Implementing a complete education through improved professional development and evidence-based instructional models and supports.**

In each of the sections below are set forth the expectations for the federal government, states, districts, and schools to meet these benchmarks for the college and career readiness of America's students.

College- and Career-Ready Students

The administration's proposal for reauthorizing *ESEA* will maintain formula grants to high-poverty school districts while making significant changes to better support states, districts, and schools, including middle and high schools, in improving achievement for all groups of students, including low-income and minority students, English Learners, and students with disabilities. This support will be focused on the following efforts.

Rigorous College- and Career-Ready Standards. Following the lead of the nation's governors and state education leaders, the administration is calling on all states to adopt state-developed standards in English language arts and mathematics that build toward college and career readiness by the time students graduate from high school, and high-quality statewide assessments aligned with these standards. States may choose to: either upgrade their existing standards, working with their four-year public university system to certify that mastery of the standards ensures that a student will not need to take remedial coursework upon admission to a postsecondary institution in the system; or work with other states to create state-developed common standards that build toward college and career readiness. To ensure that all students are learning what they need to succeed, standards must be based on evidence regarding what students must know and be able to do at each grade level to be on track to graduate from high school college- and career-ready. Such standards will also give families and communities the information they need to determine whether their students are on track toward college and career readiness and to evaluate their schools' effectiveness. States will continue to implement statewide science standards and aligned assessments in specific

grade spans, and may include such assessments—as well as statewide assessments in other subjects, such as history—in their accountability systems. Finally, states will develop and adopt statewide English language proficiency standards for English Learners, aligned so that they reflect the academic language necessary to master state content standards.

In all of our conversations with people from every state, we've heard a consistent message that our schools aren't expecting enough of students. We need to raise our standards so that all students are graduating prepared to succeed in college and the workplace. We've also heard that people aren't looking to Washington for answers. They don't want us to provide a prescription for success. Our role should be to offer a meaningful definition of success—one that shows teachers and students what they should be striving for.

—U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Testimony Before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee on the Obama Administration's Blueprint for Reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, March 17, 2010

Rigorous and Fair Accountability and Support at Every Level.

Building on these statewide standards and aligned assessments, every state will ensure that its statewide system of accountability rewards schools and districts for progress and success, requires rigorous interventions in the lowest-performing schools and districts, and allows local flexibility to determine the appropriate improvement and support strategies for most schools.

To foster public accountability for results and help focus improvement and support efforts, states must have data systems in place to gather information that is critical to determining how schools and districts are progressing in preparing students to graduate from high school college- and career-ready. States and districts will collect and make public data relating to student academic achievement and growth in English language arts and mathematics, student academic achievement in science, and, if states choose, student academic achievement and growth in other subjects, such as history. At the high school level, this data will also include graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and rates of college enrollment without need for remediation. All of these data must be disaggregated by race, gender, ethnicity, disability status, English Learner status, and family income. States and districts also will collect other key information about teaching and learning conditions, including information on school climate, such as student, teacher and school leader attendance, disciplinary incidents, or student, parent, and school staff surveys about their school experience.

Measuring and Supporting Schools, Districts, and States. State accountability systems will be expected to recognize progress and growth and reward success rather than only identify failure. To ensure that accountability no longer falls solely at the doors of schools, districts and states will be held accountable for providing their schools, principals, and teachers with the support they need to succeed. States will be asked to recognize and reward schools and districts making the most progress, to provide flexibility for local improvement efforts, and to focus the most rigorous support and interventions on the very lowest-performing schools and districts.

The administration will call on states, districts, and schools to aim for the ambitious goal—by 2020—of all students graduating or on track to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. Performance targets, based on whole-school and subgroup achievement and growth, and graduation rates, will guide improvement toward that ambitious goal, and those that are meeting all of their performance targets will be recognized and rewarded. States, districts, and schools will look not just at absolute performance and proficiency but also at individual student growth and school progress over time, and at the additional data described above, to guide local improvement and support strategies for schools.

Why Focus on College and Career Readiness?

Four of every 10 new college students, including half of those at two-year institutions, take remedial courses, and many employers comment on the inadequate preparation of high school graduates.

The schools, districts, and states that are successful in reaching performance targets, significantly increasing student performance for all students, closing achievement gaps, or turning around the lowest-performing schools (at the district and state levels) will be recognized as “Reward” schools, districts, and states. States will receive funds to design innovative programs to reward high-poverty Reward schools and Reward districts. Rewards may include financial rewards for the staff and students and for development of and participation in communities of practice to share best practices and

replicate successful strategies to assist lower-performing schools and districts. Rewards may also include flexibility in the use of *ESEA* funds and, as appropriate, competitive preference for Reward states, high-need Reward districts, and high-need Reward schools in some federal grant competitions. Reward districts will also be given flexibility in implementing interventions in their lowest-performing schools, described further below.

At the other end of the spectrum will be “Challenge” states, districts, and schools. States will identify Challenge schools that are in need of specific assistance. The first category of Challenge schools will be the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in each state, based on student academic achievement, student growth, and graduation rates, that are not making progress to improve. In these schools, states and districts will be required to implement one of four school turnaround models, to support better outcomes for students. Reward districts will receive flexibility to implement a different research-based intervention model beyond the scope of the four school turnaround models. The next 5 percent of low-performing schools will be identified in a warning category, and states and districts will implement research-based, locally determined strategies to help them improve.

Schools that are not closing significant, persistent achievement gaps will constitute another category of Challenge schools. In these schools, districts will be required to implement data-driven interventions to support those students who are furthest behind and close the achievement gap. For all Challenge schools, districts may implement strategies, such as expanded learning time, supplemental educational services, public school choice, or others, to help students succeed.

Challenge districts whose schools, principals, and teachers are not receiving the support they need to succeed may also face significant governance or staffing changes, including replacement of the superintendent. Both Challenge districts and states will face additional restrictions on the use of *ESEA* funds and may be required to work with an outside organization to improve student academic achievement.

Building Capacity for Support at Every Level. As the administration asks more of each level of the system, it will also build state and district capacity to support schools, school leaders, teachers, and students. The administration's proposal will allow states and districts to reserve funds to carry out such activities as (1) supporting and complementing the adoption of rigorous standards and high-quality assessments, and supporting teachers in teaching to those standards; (2) supporting the more effective use of data to identify local needs and improve student outcomes; (3) improving capacity at the state and district levels to support the effective use of technology to improve instruction; (4) coordinating with early learning programs to improve school readiness; or (5) carrying out effective family engagement strategies.

Districts will be required to set aside a portion of funds under this program to improve student performance in high-need schools by implementing effective school improvement strategies and carrying out strategies to ensure the equitable distribution of effective teachers and school leaders. Reward districts will be allowed flexibility around this set-aside.

Fostering Comparability and Equity. To give every student a fair chance to succeed and to give principals and teachers the resources to support student success, the administration

will encourage increased resource equity at every level of the system. Over time, districts will be required to ensure that their high-poverty schools receive state and local funding levels (for personnel and relevant nonpersonnel expenditures) comparable to those received by their low-poverty schools. In addition, districts that use their resources to provide strong support to disadvantaged students will be given additional flexibility to provide such support. States will be asked to measure and report on resource disparities and develop a plan to tackle them.

Assessing Achievement

The administration's proposal also will maintain support for state efforts to improve the quality of their assessment systems, and to develop and implement the upgraded standards and assessments required by the College- and Career-Ready Students program (the \$14.5 billion request for the reauthorized Title I, Part A, currently the Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies). Improved assessments can be used to: accurately measure student growth; better measure how states, districts, schools, principals, and teachers are educating students; help teachers adjust and focus their teaching; and provide better information to students and their families.

States will receive formula grants to develop and implement high-quality assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics that accurately measure student academic achievement and growth, provide feedback to support and improve teaching, and measure school success and progress. States may also use funds to develop or implement high-quality, rigorous statewide assessments in other academic or career and technical subjects,



high school course assessments, English language proficiency assessments, and interim or formative assessments. Beginning in 2015, formula funds will be available only to states that are implementing assessments based on college- and career-ready standards that are common to a significant number of states. The program also will support competitive grants to consortia of states and to other entities working in partnership with states for research on, or development and improvement of, additional high-quality assessments to be used by multiple states in such areas as science, history, or foreign languages; high school course assessments in academic and career and technical subjects; universally designed assessments; and assessments for English Learners and students with disabilities.

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