



*Reward Excellence and
Promote Innovation*



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, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style.



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Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

To help achieve President Obama's stated goal of providing a world-class education to every child in America, 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 raise the bar for and reward excellence in performance, and promote innovative and continuous improvement in schools.

Raising the Bar and Rewarding Excellence

This compound strategy for creating a world-class education uses a three-pronged approach in the proposed reauthorization:

Fostering a Race to the Top. Modeled after the Race to the Top program authorized by the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*, the proposal will continue Race to the Top's incentives for systemic reforms by providing competitive grants to states and school districts to take on ambitious and comprehensive reforms, and to encourage the broad identification, dissemination, adoption, and use of effective policies and practices. State and school district grantees will be required to develop and implement comprehensive plans, in

collaboration with other stakeholders, to dramatically improve student outcomes, including: focusing on rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments; providing better information to families to help them evaluate and improve their children's schools, and to educators to help them improve their students' learning; supporting effective teachers and school leaders; turning around persistently low-performing schools; and supporting innovative models for reform.

States and school districts that receive grants may spend funds flexibly in a manner aligned with their plans, but states must award at least 50 percent of their grant funds to school districts that participate in the state plan. Grantees will be required to meet specific annual performance targets related to the implementation of their plans and to improving measurable outcomes for students and schools, and will receive continuation funding only if they implement their proposed plans effectively and meet their performance targets. Grantees must invest in rigorous evaluation of their ongoing performance and reform efforts.

Supporting effective public school choice. The administration will support the expansion of high-performing public charter schools and other autonomous public schools by providing competitive grants to states, charter school authorizers, charter management organizations, districts, and nonprofit organizations, to start or expand high-performing public charter schools and other high-performing autonomous public schools,

with a priority for applicants proposing to start or expand high-performing public charter schools, The proposal also supports local communities as they expand public school choice options for students within and across school districts through competitive grants to districts, consortia of districts, and states in partnership with districts to expand high-quality public school educational options for students, especially students in low-performing schools, and ensure that students and families are aware of these options. Finally, the proposal will continue to provide competitive grants to districts to support magnet schools under a desegregation plan ordered by a federal court, state court, or other authorized state agency or official, or approved by the secretary. The reauthorized program will expand and improve options for students and increase diversity by placing a greater emphasis on funding whole-school magnet school programs or models that have a record of success in raising student academic achievement and reducing minority group isolation.

Promoting a culture of college readiness and success. Access to a challenging high school curriculum has a greater impact on whether a student will earn a four-year college degree than his or her high school test scores, class rank, or grades. The proposed reauthorization will increase access to college-level, dual credit, and other accelerated courses in high-need schools and support college-going strategies and models that will help students succeed.



Promoting Innovation and Continuous Improvement

This strategy for ensuring a world-class education for America's students relies on three approaches, which will be funded under the new reauthorization proposal.

Fostering innovation and accelerating success. The Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) builds on the i3 program launched through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*, and will provide additional competitive grants to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative and evidence-based practices, programs, and strategies that significantly improve student outcomes. The secretary will use a rigorous, three-tiered evidence framework that directs the highest levels of funding to programs with the strongest evidence, and also provides significant support for promising programs that are willing to undergo rigorous evaluation. Grantees will use funds to: scale up practices, strategies, or programs for which there is strong evidence of success in significantly closing achievement gaps between groups of students and in significantly increasing student academic achievement for all groups of students; validate and expand practices, strategies, or programs for which there is moderate evidence of success; or develop and test promising practices, strategies, or programs for which there is potential and some research-based support. Each grantee will be required to conduct or participate in an independent evaluation of its project. Grantees will be required to form partnerships with the private sector to secure matching funds.

We're making a big philosophical and strategic change with these grants. We're moving away from formula grants—where everybody gets a little money—and to competitive ones where we can support people doing the best work. ... We want our scarce resources to leverage dramatic change, change that will accelerate progress for decades to come. ... The goal for the Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation funds is to reward applicants that have the courage, capacity, and commitment to reform—real progress for children is what we care about.

—U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Remarks to the National School Boards Association, Feb. 1, 2010

Supporting, recognizing, and rewarding local innovations.

The administration's proposal will encourage and support local innovation by creating fewer, larger, more flexible funding streams around areas integral to student success, giving states and districts flexibility to focus on local needs. New competitive funding streams will provide greater flexibility, reward results, and ensure that federal funds are used wisely. At the same time, districts will have fewer restrictions on blending funds from different categories with less red tape.

Supporting student success. Tackling persistent achievement gaps requires public agencies, community organizations, and families to share responsibility for improving outcomes for



students. The proposal will prioritize programs that include a comprehensive redesign of the school day, week, or year, that promote schools as the center of their communities, or that partner with community organizations. The proposal also will invest in new models that keep students safe, supported, and healthy both in and out of school, and that support strategies to better engage families and community members in their children's education.

For all students to thrive in the classroom, in college, and in a career, our educational system must continuously develop and embrace the very best practices, policies, and ideas. This administration will ask policymakers and educators at all levels to carefully analyze the impact of their policies, practices, and systems on student outcomes.

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