



GIVING EVERY CHILD A FAIR SHOT:

PROGRESS UNDER THE **OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S** EDUCATION AGENDA



FOREWORD

When we came into office at the height of the worst recession in generations, we knew a key to creating true middle-class security would be preparing the next generation to compete in the global economy. Thanks to the hard work of our teachers, students, parents, and state and local leaders, that commitment is paying off in new opportunities for our communities and our country.

Today, on National Teacher Appreciation Day, we say thank you to the leaders in our classrooms and reaffirm our shared belief that all children, no matter where they live or what they look like, can grow up to be whatever they want. A world-class education is the single most important factor in making that possible. It determines not just whether our children can compete for the best jobs, but whether America can out-compete other countries.

At the beginning of my Administration, we set an ambitious goal to once again lead the world in our share of college graduates. By reforming our education system from cradle to career, and with the help of a newly announced \$100 million down payment to help expand free community college programs and connect college graduates to in-demand jobs, we're on our way to realizing that goal.

We're also proud that high school graduation rates are at an all-time high and dropout rates are at historic lows. Across the board, we're raising expectations for everyone from the Congress to the classroom—but we didn't stop there. We've also raised standards so they are rigorous and relevant.

It starts in our children's youngest years. We set a goal to expand high-quality early education investments in every child. Over the last three years, 38 states have increased those investments.

We're also making sure our students have access to a well-rounded education—that includes exposure to a variety of classes, from computer skills and reading to science and math. We've cut our schools' digital divide in half, and today 20 million more students—including many in low-income communities—can access high-speed internet and the modern learning tools it provides.

Mindful of the needs of businesses in high-growth and high-demand industries, and true to the principle that a quality education cannot be a privilege for the few, we also proposed a plan that offers two years of free community college to anyone willing to work for it. We're also proud that there are 1 million more black and Latino students in college than there were at the start of my Administration.

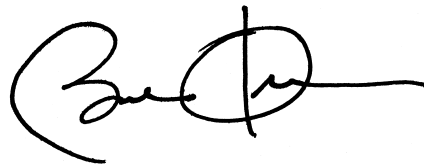
At the center of all this progress are the teachers we celebrate year-round, including today. Like those who made a difference in my life, our students' teachers are the ones who help them discover, dream, believe in themselves, and realize the potential our nation promises. That's why one of the most important priorities of my Administration has been to ensure every classroom has a great teacher. To do that, we've reviewed every element of our education system—from standards to assessments to how we train, support, and reward our teachers—to bolster our national effort to improve the teaching profession. As part of that progress, we are on track to train 100,000 more outstanding math and science teachers by 2021.

Our teachers deserve credit for each of our accomplishments and the progress we're continuing to make, from better early education and higher standards to better student performance and higher graduation rates.

Like so many patriotic public servants driven by the reward of giving back, our educators didn't choose their field because of the big paychecks, easy work, or short hours. They are passionate about helping our students realize the best versions of themselves so our country can become the best version of itself. Time and again our teachers have met this solemn responsibility, even as we've asked more of them than ever before.

In our changing world, our sons' and daughters' best job qualification isn't what they do—it's what they know. Our commitment to their education means giving them the knowledge they need to thrive and lead. It is a commitment to prepare them not only to get good jobs, but also to be good citizens—not just to know the correct answer, but to be curious and caring about the world around them.

The future belongs to the nation that best educates its people. If we continue building on the progress we've made over the past seven years, I'm confident we will continue to be that nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", with a large, stylized initial "B" and "O" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

INTRODUCTION



Since 2008, the nation's high school graduation rate has had its steepest improvements in the past 40 years. There are close to 300,000 fewer dropouts per year, and the number of dropout factory high schools has declined from 1,800 to 1,000. Over a million more students have earned their diploma as a result. This would not have happened if the Obama administration had not made raising high school graduation rates and transforming or replacing dropout factory high schools an urgent national priority from the start. The sense of urgency was then backed up with an array of focused efforts, which made a difference, including School Improvement Grants, Promise Neighborhoods, Investing in Innovation (i3) awards, the high school graduation initiative, and efforts to spread early warning systems, reduce suspensions, increase college access, combat chronic absenteeism and maintain graduation rate accountability.



— DR. ROBERT BALFANZ
Director, Everyone Graduates Center and
Diplomas Now, Johns Hopkins University

President Barack Obama entered office in 2009 with a comprehensive vision for changing our education system to advance opportunity. That vision included changes and improvements across the continuum of learning, beginning with high-quality early childhood education and extending to and through postsecondary education. The President's plan for preschool to twelfth grade (P-12) education focused on the following overarching goals:

- Fix and reform No Child Left Behind (NCLB);
- Ensure all students are given the same opportunity to achieve to high standards that prepare them for college and careers, and are held to the same high expectations through high-quality assessments;
- Turn around the persistently lowest-performing schools;
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and child care so that all of our students enter kindergarten prepared and ready for success;
- Better recruit, prepare, retain, and reward America's teachers and school leaders;
- Advance equity in education for all students through stronger schools;
- Make science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education a national priority;
- Address the dropout crisis by focusing on proven methods to improve student achievement and enhance graduation and higher education opportunities; and
- Grow innovation and investment in what works.

Those goals animated the work that the Obama administration undertook in early, elementary, and secondary education—and nearly seven-and-a-half years later, we can demonstrate significant, hard-earned progress across these goals, as well as more recently developed goals like high-speed Internet access in schools.

This report will provide an overview of the most significant education policies advanced during the Obama administration, and illustrate the metrics associated with progress during the President's two terms in office. Additionally, it will offer a description of areas where we, as a nation, must continue to drive improvement so that we can put all students in a position to fully realize their potential.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRESS

Without question, our education system is much stronger today than it was before President Obama entered office. The success of the past seven-and-a-half years is due, in large part, to the hard work of state and local leaders, educators and school leaders, and parents and students. This section details some of the most significant progress made during the President's time in office.

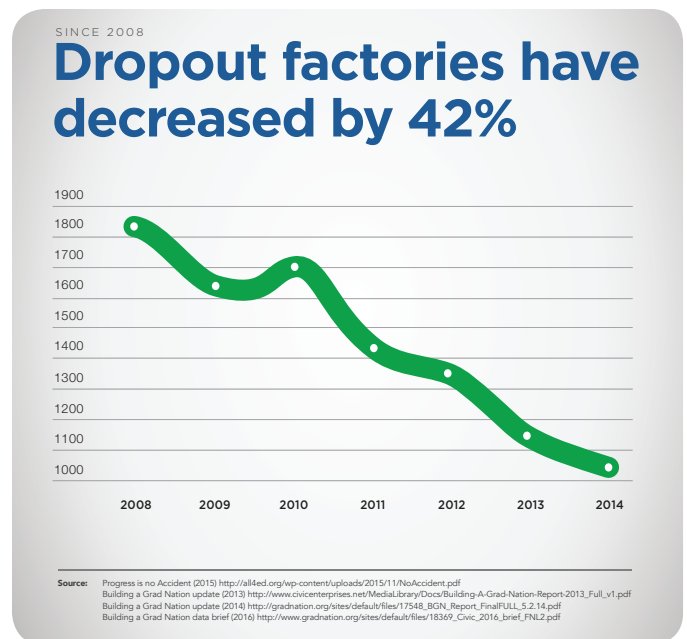
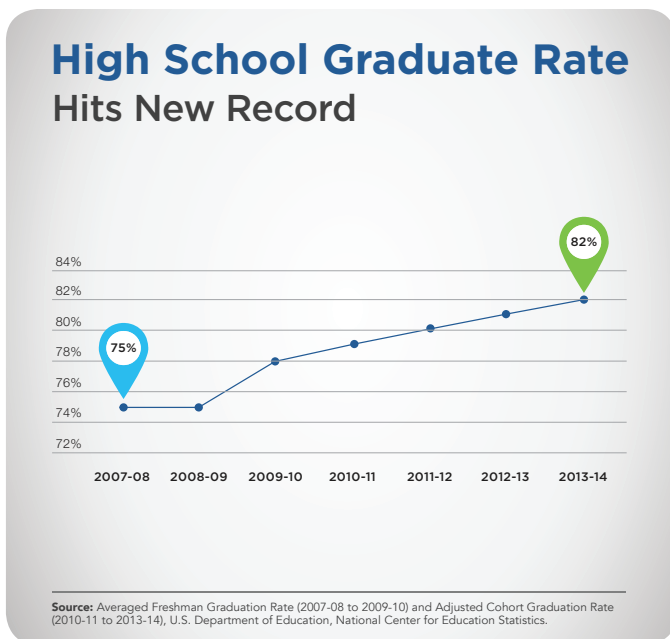
Increasing Graduation Rates and Turning around America's Lowest-Performing Schools

In 2008, a quarter of our high school students did not earn a high school diploma on time. Since President Obama took office, the graduation rate has increased steadily and, according to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), students in the United States (U.S.) are graduating from high school at a higher rate than ever before, at 82 percent. Additionally, the progress made by black and Latino students since 2011 outpaced the growth of all other students.

We also have seen a significant reduction in the percentage of students who do not complete high school on time—from 1,015,946 students a year in 2008 to 744,193 students in 2012, a 27 percent drop in just four years. And we know that the percentage of young people who drop out of high school altogether has decreased, with some of the greatest improvements made by Latino students.

For example, in 1991, 35 percent of 16- to 24-year-old Latinos were high school dropouts—more than double the rate experienced by black students and nearly four times the dropout rate experienced by white students. That percentage shrunk to just below 12 percent in 2013—a share of young people not completing high school that is still too high, but a marked improvement from two decades before.

The number of “dropout factories”—schools where 40 percent or more of the students do not graduate on time and that account for a significant proportion of our nation's dropouts—also has gone down sharply during President Obama's two terms. In 2002, there were roughly 2,000 of these schools across the country, accounting for a significant number of our dropouts. In 2014, the number of these schools has been reduced to 1,040—a near 50 percent reduction since these data were first collected.



This type of positive change would not have occurred without the high premium this administration has placed on turning around our lowest-performing schools. Through policies put forward in Race to the Top and agreements to provide flexibility from NCLB (“ESEA flexibility”), states have built accountability systems specifically oriented around providing the greatest support to their lowest-performing schools. Through the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, all 50 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) have received more than \$7 billion to support turnaround efforts, and we are seeing progress in those schools. Of those schools that received support during the 2009-2010 school year, a third of schools saw double-digit gains in reading and 39 percent of schools saw double-digit gains in math. Among the first cohort of high schools that received support through SIG, increases in graduation rates have out-paced the national average.

Adopting World-Class Standards and Aligned, High-Quality Assessments

For the past seven-and-a-half years, President Obama has called for all states to adopt high academic standards that prepare all students for success in college and careers. The administration encouraged states’ voluntary adoption of these standards through its first Race to the Top grant competition in 2009. Today, 49 states and D.C. have adopted and are implementing college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments for their students. In the future, with the recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), every state will be required to hold all students to standards that ensure when students graduate from high school they are prepared to enter the workforce or to enter college without need for remediation.

Improving Access to High-Quality Early Education for All Students

In 2009, only 38 states offered students access to state-funded preschool, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. In his 2013 State of the Union Address, President Obama called for all children to have access to high-quality, state-supported preschool. Since the President’s announcement, 38 states and D.C. have invested more than an additional \$1.5 billion in support of preschool and, today, all but four states offer preschool to young children. To support these and new efforts to expand access to high-quality preschool, the U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has invested \$750 million to support states in the development or expansion of

their delivery of high-quality preschool through the Preschool Development Grants program. In its first three years, this program has made it possible for 230 high-needs communities to provide more than 100,000 additional children with access to high-quality preschool. Another key part of President Obama’s early education strategy has been to improve and expand Head Start. Since the President took office, we have increased Head Start funding by about \$4 billion to expand the program’s reach and implement important reforms to continue improving its quality.

Connecting America’s Classrooms

In June 2013, President Obama unveiled a bold, new initiative called ConnectED to connect 99 percent of America’s students to the Internet through high-speed wireless and broadband Internet within five years. The President called on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to modernize and leverage its existing E-Rate program to meet that goal. E-Rate, the government’s largest education technology program, helps ensure that schools and libraries have affordable access to the Internet. Through two separate orders adopted in 2014, and, as a result of the President’s urging, the FCC committed \$5 billion over five years specifically for expanding access to high-speed wireless Internet and boosted the amount of funding available annually to schools and libraries through E-Rate from \$2.4 billion to \$3.9 billion. All told, this amounts to an additional \$8 billion of federal support over five years.

Through these efforts, we have been able to cut the connectivity gap by more than half and are on-track to meet the President’s goal. In 2013, only 30 percent of school districts had access to high-speed broadband, leaving 40 million students without access to that connectivity. Today, 77 percent of school districts do, reaching an additional 20 million students.

Reforming No Child Left Behind

When President Obama entered office, NCLB was two years overdue for reauthorization. The President released a blueprint for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the legislation NCLB had reauthorized, in March 2010 and called on Congress repeatedly to fulfill its obligation to repair the law and offer needed relief to state and local leaders, teachers, parents, and students. In the absence of congressional action, the President asked then U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to develop a plan to offer states relief from the most onerous requirements in NCLB, for states moving forward on key reforms for students and educators.



President Obama signs the Every Student Succeeds Act into law on December 10, 2015. Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

Under the Department of Education’s waiver authority in ESEA, the Secretary provided states with the opportunity to voluntarily request waivers of certain requirements of the law in exchange for a commitment to engage in needed reforms.

Between 2011 and 2015, more than 40 states and D.C. applied for and received this flexibility from the Department of Education, implementing their state-developed plans. Without this flexibility, states would have had to labor under the restrictions and requirements of NCLB, requiring states and districts to implement the same set of interventions in every school identified in need of improvement, regardless of the individual needs and circumstances affecting students in those schools.

Many of the reforms the Department of Education encouraged through ESEA flexibility were codified in the bipartisan ESSA, which the President signed in December 2015.

Improving Pathways to Teaching and Supporting Outstanding Teachers and Leaders in Our Schools

One of the first pieces of legislation the President signed was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act), which provided temporary relief to states to cushion the blow of the recession and to keep educators in classrooms. At the time, states faced budget shortfalls of approximately

\$400 billion in 2009, 2010, and 2011, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Because state and local governments typically provide approximately 90 percent of elementary and secondary education funding, the result could have been deep cuts for public schools.

Through the Recovery Act, the Department of Education provided states with a needed boost of funding to stabilize state funding with more than \$60 billion, some of which was dedicated specifically to supporting disadvantaged students and students with disabilities, and improving education technology. These funds had a significant impact on state budgets. According to the Department of Education, these funds enabled states to save or create more than 400,000 jobs—most directly in education. Even with this substantial help, the U.S. still lost 300,000 local education jobs between 2008 and 2012 and experienced the highest spike in student-teacher ratios in a decade. However, without the investments in the Recovery Act, the situation could have been far worse.

Apart from the significant investments in the Recovery Act, the Obama administration has engaged in extensive work to strengthen the teaching profession, including:

- **Investing more than \$2.7 billion in innovations to develop educator talent over the past seven-and-a-half years** through the award of competitive grants for: teacher preparation that includes strong partnerships between districts and colleges of education; nonprofits with a demonstrated track-record of success in recruiting, training,

or supporting educators in high-needs districts, including rural areas; and performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-needs schools.

- **Hosting the first-ever summit on labor-management collaboration**, with others that followed, to advance student achievement, convening school board presidents, superintendents, and teacher leaders from more than 150 school districts to design and enact policies that optimize student success; and creating the first International Summits on the Teaching Profession.
- **Bringing teacher and principal voices to the policymaking process** through the continuation of the Department of Education's Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program, and the establishment of the Principal Ambassador Fellowships. These educators serve as full-time federal employees for one year with responsibilities over education programs and policy, with many of them placed in the Office of the Secretary of Education. More than 100 teachers have come through the program since its establishment in 2008. Eight principals have served as ambassadors since that program's establishment in 2013.
- **Empowering educators to lead change** in their classrooms and in the teaching profession through efforts like Teach to Lead, an initiative to advance student outcomes by expanding opportunities for teacher leadership, especially those that allow teachers to stay in the classroom.
- **Calling for a STEM Master Teacher Corps**, comprised of some of the nation's finest educators in STEM subjects to improve STEM education. Corps members would make a multi-year commitment to devote their expertise, leadership and service to participate and lead high-quality professional development; identify and share promising practices in schools and districts; and help students excel in STEM subjects while taking on coaching and mentoring roles in schools. This proposal was codified into law through ESSA.

We know that the educator is the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement. We also know that students in high-needs schools are less likely to be taught by the most effective teachers and more likely to be taught by the least effective teachers. That is why the Obama administration has focused significant effort on improving the quality of the teaching workforce by encouraging school districts and states to develop high-quality teacher and leader evaluation and support systems. Because of the work begun by states through programs like Race to the Top, and continued under ESEA flexibility, states are implementing improved teacher and principal support and evaluation systems.

In 2009, only 15 states, in some way, considered student outcomes in teacher evaluations. Now, 42 states and D.C.

require the consideration of student growth and achievement in their evaluation systems. President Obama understands that standardized tests do not begin to capture all of the subtle qualities of successful teaching or all the lifelong impacts great teachers can make. That is why when states develop their systems of evaluation and support the Obama administration always has called for multiple measures in evaluating teachers, schools, districts, and states. But we also know that we must consider student achievement if we are to provide our educators with the right feedback and support to improve their practice. We are seeing states and districts make progress in the difficult work of implementing fair and useful educator evaluation systems.

To further ensure great educators for our high-needs students and schools, under the Department of Education's Excellent Educators for All Initiative, in July 2014, the Department announced that all 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico, were required to develop State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (Educator Equity Plans) to identify gaps in access to excellent educators and develop strategies to address those gaps. As of December 2015, the Department of Education has approved Educator Equity Plans for all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Making STEM Education a National Priority

Over the past seven-and-a-half years, the Obama administration's efforts have resulted in unprecedented levels of public-private collaboration in support of STEM education, including policies and budgets focused on maximizing federal investment in active, rigorous STEM-learning experiences; and innovative and wide-ranging efforts to inspire and recognize young inventors, discoverers, and makers.

The President has hosted the first-ever White House Science Fairs—six in all—which celebrate student winners of math, science, and robotics competitions. The President also hosted the first-ever Maker Faire in 2014, which showcased students and adults accessing the tools and skills necessary to design and make just about anything. This year, the White House also held the first Early STEM Symposium to highlight that STEM learning starts early, in the years before kindergarten, and to celebrate a broad range of public- and private-sector leaders committed to promoting early STEM learning across the country.

Earlier this year, the President announced a bold new call to action: to give every child the opportunity to learn computer science (CS). In just the past two months, there already has

been a strong response to the President's call to action with Hawaii, Delaware, Idaho, Rhode Island, Indiana and Virginia expanding their efforts to offer all their students access to rigorous CS courses.

In his 2011 State of the Union, the President set a national goal of preparing 100,000 excellent STEM teachers to serve in our nation's public schools within 10 years. Thanks to deep public and private commitments—including through the work of 100kin10, a collaborative of organizations led by the Carnegie Foundation, and the resources provided to STEM teachers across the country through federal programs like the Teacher Incentive Fund and Teacher Quality Partnerships—100kin10 is able to announce today that enough commitments have been secured to meet the goal the President set in 2011.

Promoting Evidenced-Based Excellence and Innovation in America's Schools

Seven-and-a-half years ago, it was not common practice to award competitive education grants on the strength of an applicant's evidence base for its intervention. That has changed; and it began with the Investing in Innovation (i3) grants. The Recovery Act provided \$650 million for i3 to guide education spending toward what works by field-testing promising practices and building on practices with a

track record of improving student outcomes. Under i3, the more rigorous evidence an organization had supporting its intervention, the larger the grant award it could potentially receive.

The Department of Education awarded 49 grants in its first i3 competition, but nearly 1,700 applicants applied—by far the largest number of applicants in a single competition in the Department's history. Now, more than 150 i3 grantees are working in every state in the country, and impacting over 2 million students.

A successor program to i3 was included as a part of ESSA. The premium on evidence-based grant-making has since extended to other programs at the Department of Education, including the SIG program, which allows a state to use an evidence-based model for turning around its lowest-performing schools, and the First in the World grant competition, which awards grants to institutions of higher education that can demonstrate evidence in significantly improving postsecondary outcomes for high-needs students.

In addition, due to requirements in ESSA, districts will now have to rely on evidence for the interventions and supports they target to their lowest-performing schools and those with large or persistent achievement gaps. That will require the expansion of a marketplace of evidence-based school improvement models—a marketplace that was largely created by i3.

THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT— A NEW FEDERAL-STATE PARTNERSHIP

“ We are a place that believes every child, no matter where they come from, can grow up to be anything they want ... And I'm confident that if we fix No Child Left Behind, if we continue to reform American education, continue to invest in our children's future, that's the America we will always be. ”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
March 14, 2011

For more than 50 years, ESEA has served to expand and protect educational opportunity for all students. ESSA represents the newest comprehensive reauthorization of ESEA since NCLB, and the law embodies much of what the President has called for in improving P-12 education since entering office, including: high expectations for all students; a balanced approach to testing; a strengthened pipeline of educator talent from recruitment through retention; opportunities for children to access high-quality preschool; investing in evidence-based and innovative local programs; and interventions and supports for the schools and students that need help most.

A Broken Law

Until recently, Congress regularly updated the law to ensure that federal education policies and programs were well-suited to the changing needs of states, districts, and schools. However, during the NCLB era, the country labored under the same law for nearly 15 years.

NCLB's goals were the right ones: high standards; meaningful accountability; closing the achievement gap and making sure that every child was learning, not just some. But in practice, it often fell short. With respect to accountability, it became clear that the law was too rigid: it did not make room for fair and accurate identification of students and schools for support. For example, NCLB did not allow states to measure student growth over time to meet the law's accountability requirements. Instead, the law required states to set annual measurable objectives based on reaching the goal that, by 2014, all students would perform at the proficient level on state reading and math tests. This forced states to set arbitrary benchmarks mapped to the 2014 goal. If any school failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the state goal for two or more years, the law required those schools to implement specific interventions. Those interventions, prescribed in the law, were insensitive to the individual needs and circumstances that may have caused a school to fall short in meeting the state goal.

A Crisis Perpetuated by Gridlock

By the time President Obama entered office, NCLB was two years overdue for reauthorization. In March 2010, after outreach to the field, the President released a blueprint for rewriting ESEA, addressing the issues created by NCLB, while continuing to shine a bright light on the achievement gap.

Under the President's blueprint for ESEA reauthorization, state accountability systems would set a high bar of all students graduating from high school ready to succeed in college and careers. States' accountability systems also would recognize and reward high-poverty schools and districts that are showing improvement in getting their students on the path to success, using measures of progress and growth. States and

districts would continue to focus on the achievement gap by identifying and intervening in schools that are persistently failing to close those gaps, and schools where the entire school is falling behind. For other schools, states and districts would have flexibility to determine appropriate improvement and support options.

The blueprint asked states and districts to develop meaningful ways of measuring teacher and principal effectiveness to provide better support for educators, enhance the profession through recognizing and rewarding excellence, build pathways for teachers and principals, and ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great principal.

However, Congress did not present the President with a reauthorized ESEA for several years—despite work on the law. By 2011, large numbers of schools were identified in need of improvement for failure to meet AYP, undermining the credibility of NCLB and straining the ability of states and districts to intervene effectively to address school needs. In the spring of 2011, nearly 40 percent of schools were not meeting their goals under NCLB and, even assuming all schools progressed as quickly as schools performing in the top quartile, the Department of Education estimated the percentage of schools identified for improvement would more than double by the following school year. Without some form of relief from the law, data showed that states and districts would have to intervene in four out of every five schools in America.

SINCE ENTERING OFFICE, PRESIDENT OBAMA HAS CALLED FOR A BIPARTISAN DEAL TO FIX NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND:



Jan. 19, 2010: President Obama visits Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church, VA to highlight the need for high standards, rigorous accountability and reform in America's schools.



March 13, 2010: Secretary Duncan issues the Obama Administration's Blueprint for Reform, to fix No Child Left Behind and re-focus America's schools on the goal of preparing all students for college and careers.



March 14, 2011: President Obama visits Kenmore Middle School in Arlington, VA and urges Congress to act before the next school year to replace NCLB and its one-size-fits all mandates with a law that works better for students, parents and teachers.



Sept. 23, 2011: President Obama announces the first comprehensive plan to fix NCLB through executive action, a waiver program that enables states to gain flexibility in exchange for plans that set high standards, improve accountability, and support the evaluation and development of teachers and principals.



Feb. 9, 2012: Joined by Governor Bill Haslam (R-TN), President Obama welcomes leaders from ten states to the White House to announce the first round of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waivers approved under his Administration's executive action.



March 2015: President Obama visits separately with leaders of the nation's largest school districts and with 44 of the nation's chief State School Officers, to discuss shared priorities in the reauthorization of ESEA, including advancing equity and accountability and improving opportunities and outcomes for students.



July 2015: Both the US House and Senate pass comprehensive bills to replace NCLB. This is the first time since 2001 that both chambers have passed a reauthorization of ESEA.



Oct. 25, 2015: President Obama meets with state and district leaders in the Oval Office and issues an open letter, calling for limits to standardize testing.



Nov. 19, 2015: The US House of Representatives and Senate Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Conference Committee votes 38-1 in favor of advancing a bipartisan agreement, which includes key Administration priorities.



Dec. 2015: The Obama Administration calls on Congress to swiftly enact the bipartisan Every Student Succeed Act to revise and replace No Child Left Behind.

DECEMBER 1, 2015

Acting when the Congress Would Not

With dim prospects of advancing a comprehensive replacement to NCLB in Congress, President Obama asked then U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to develop a plan to offer states relief from the most onerous requirements of the law.

Using waiver authority granted to the Department of Education under ESEA, the Secretary provided states with the opportunity to voluntarily request waivers of certain requirements of the law in exchange for a commitment to engage in needed reforms for students, including holding all students to state-developed college- and career-ready standards; better evaluating and supporting teachers and principals; reducing administrative burden; and focusing resources and attention on the lowest-performing schools, including high schools. States could also include other indicators of student success in their accountability systems, beyond assessment results and graduation rates—to paint a broader picture of education excellence. These principles largely mirrored the goals put forward in the President’s blueprint for ESEA reauthorization.

In 2012, joined by Governor Bill Haslam (R-TN), President Obama welcomed leaders from 10 states to the White House to announce the first round of waivers approved under his administration’s executive action to offer ESEA flexibility. Since 2012, over 40 states have taken advantage of this flexibility and developed state-driven solutions through ESEA flexibility.

Building on Progress

In the spring and summer of 2015, the House and Senate advanced comprehensive reauthorizations of ESEA to replace NCLB, which eventually led to legislation agreed upon by substantial bipartisan majorities in both chambers of Congress and presented to the President as ESSA.

“The Administration’s leadership to ensure all schools are held accountable for the performance of all students and that needed federal dollars weren’t diverted from their intended recipients was critically important to advancing equity in the new Every Student Succeeds Act.”

— WADE HENDERSON
President and CEO, The Leadership Conference
on Civil and Human Rights

ESSA embraces much of the vision the President has outlined for education policy since 2009 and codified into law many initiatives created and championed by the Obama administration:

- **College- and Career-Ready Standards for America’s Learners:** The law affirms the path taken by 49 states and D.C. to hold all students to challenging academic content standards that will prepare them to graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workforce.
- **Rigorous Accountability for All Students:** Consistent with the administration’s longstanding goals around accountability, states must set ambitious targets to close student achievement and graduation rate gaps among subgroups of students to meet their goals that require progress for all students. In schools where too many students are consistently falling behind, school districts will ensure they receive tailored interventions and supports appropriate to the needs of those schools and the students they serve.
- **Reform and Resources for America’s Struggling Schools and Students:** Consistent with the policies in place under the administration’s ESEA flexibility agreements, the law moves away from NCLB’s one-size-fits-all accountability system and ensures that states, at a minimum, undertake reforms in their lowest-performing schools, in high schools with high dropout rates, and in schools where subgroups are falling behind. It includes provisions that would require districts to use evidence-based models to support school interventions in these schools.
- **Initiatives to Improve Opportunities and Outcomes for Students:** The law includes initiatives modeled after the administration’s programs and proposals to:
 - Develop, refine, and replicate innovative and ambitious reforms that are proven in research to close the achievement gap in America’s schools, a successor to the administration’s existing i3 program;
 - Expand incentives to prepare, develop, and advance effective teachers and principals in America’s schools;
 - Expand flexibility for districts to offer all of their students a well-rounded education, narrow the course equity gap, especially in STEM subjects, and invest in effective uses of technology;
 - Provide a continuum of cradle-to-career services to address the significant challenges faced by students and families living in high-poverty communities through the Promise Neighborhoods effort;
 - Strengthen support for high-performing public charter schools to increase quality options available to high-needs students; and

- Continue support for magnet schools designed to reduce, prevent, or eliminate racial isolation, with added emphasis on socioeconomic status as a means to support comprehensive integration.
- **A Smart and Balanced Approach to Testing:** The law maintains statewide assessments to ensure that teachers and parents can mark the progress and performance of their children every year, from third to eighth grade and once in high school. The law encourages a smarter approach to testing by moving away from a sole focus on standardized tests to drive decisions around the quality of schools, and by allowing for the use of multiple measures of student learning and progress to make school accountability decisions. It also includes provisions consistent with the principles in the President's Testing Action Plan around reducing the amount of classroom time spent on standardized testing, including support for state efforts to audit and streamline their current assessment systems and pilot new innovative assessments.
- **Promoting Equity in State and Local Funding:** To ensure equity and opportunity, all students need access to great schools with adequate resources. The law includes a pilot program—similar to a proposal put forward by the administration this year in its Fiscal Year 2017 budget where districts must demonstrate a commitment to equitable distribution of state and local dollars—based on actual per-pupil expenditures—to their highest-poverty schools. In exchange, districts would be allowed to allocate and use Title I and other federal formula funds in a more flexible manner to support comprehensive plans that improve achievement and outcomes for their neediest students. The law also includes provisions that require reporting on actual school-level expenditures, allowing the public, for the first time, to see the amount of federal, state, and local funding distributed to each and every school.



Since his first years in office, President Obama has prioritized education—in funding, advancing innovation, taking on low-performing schools, and tackling chronic education challenges. Through all of his budgets, Race to the Top and ESEA flex, President Obama has been dogged in pushing for a reauthorization of NCLB. Supporting and addressing the needs of low-income students and students of color have always been at the center of those efforts. ESSA challenges states to embrace the principle that all students can learn if given the opportunity and to encourage high standards that meet the needs of a 21st century global economy.



— GEORGE MILLER
Former Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee

THE BIPARTISAN BILL TO FIX NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT, INCORPORATES MANY OF THE **PRIORITIES THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION PUT FORWARD:**

	NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND	OBAMA ADMINISTRATION POLICIES/PROPOSAL	BIPARTISAN BILL
College and Career Ready Standards		✓	✓
Annual Statewide Assessments of All Students' Learning	✓	✓	✓
Innovative Local Assessment Pilot		✓	✓
Student Performance Targets and School Ratings	 <p>Unrealistic and set by federal government based on tests alone</p>	 <p>State driven and based on multiple measures</p>	 <p>State driven and based on multiple measures</p>
Accountability, Interventions and Supports for Struggling Schools	 <p>One-size-fits-all federal identification and interventions</p>	 <p>State developed identification and intervention with support for bottom 5% of schools, schools where subgroups are falling behind, and high schools with high dropout rates.</p> <p>Dedicated funding for lowest-performing schools.</p>	 <p>State developed identification and intervention with support for bottom 5% of schools, schools where subgroups are falling behind, and high schools with high dropout rates.</p> <p>Dedicated funding for lowest-performing schools.</p>
Teacher and Leader Evaluation and Support Systems Including Student Learning and Observations		✓	
Competitive Program to Evaluate and Reward Effective Educators (Based on Student Learning) in High-Need Schools	✓	✓	✓
Includes Pre-K		✓	✓
Competitive program for Innovative and Evidence-Building		✓	✓
Competitive Program to Replicate High-Quality Charter Schools		✓	✓
Competitive Program to Encourage Wrap-Around Support Systems for Vulnerable Communities		✓	✓

LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO ENCOURAGE MEANINGFUL PROGRESS

“ One of the things about education is that it doesn’t deliver results tomorrow or the next day; this is a decade-long or longer proposition. We plant seeds now; we make changes now; and we watch each successive class benefit from these reforms. ”

– PRESIDENT OBAMA
October 2, 2015

President Obama came to office in 2009 seeking to create real change and reform in the American education system. He recognized that a strong education is a prerequisite for success in the global economy, but also that our schools were not doing enough to prepare students for college and careers. Through key programs—like Race to the Top, i3, Promise Neighborhoods and SIG—the Obama administration has established evidence-based reforms to help all our students, including those who need the most support, succeed. Through signature initiatives and proposals like ConnectED, Next Generation High Schools, the White House Science Fair, and Computer Science for All, the President has increased connectivity and elevated STEM education to give students the tools they need to compete in the 21st century. And, through an increased investment in early childhood education and high-quality preschool, more students are now getting the strong start they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Through all of these programs and initiatives, the Obama administration has maintained a focus on improving outcomes for students who have been historically underserved in particular.

Even during a period marked by partisan division, a strong bipartisan majority in Congress has recognized the value of a number of the President’s signature initiatives—including the Preschool Development Grants program, i3 and Promise Neighborhoods programs—by authorizing them, or similar programs, in ESSA. These initiatives have created real change and evidence-based reforms, and America’s students will continue to benefit from these programs in the years and decades to come.

The President’s Call for a Race to the Top in American Education

In February 2009, President Obama signed historic legislation to address the economic crisis. The Recovery Act not only addressed the immediate crises in the jobs, financial, and housing markets, but it also devoted resources to fundamentally reform the way our education system works. Race to the Top, a core part of the Recovery Act, offered billions of dollars in funding to states that committed to reshaping their education systems to give every student the chance to graduate college- and career-ready, regardless of their circumstances.

Changing Systems to Improve Learning

The fundamental goal of Race to the Top was to create incentives for states to scale the good work they already were doing and to put into place significant, systemic plans that would lead to, in the President’s words, “Better standards. Better teaching. Better schools.” In a departure from traditional federal grant-making, the Department of Education requested that states solicit feedback, and assure buy-in, from stakeholders at every level of school governance, from



Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

classroom teachers to state-level officials. Race to the Top recognized there was no one silver bullet to fix education systems and, instead, encouraged states to pick their own paths to make improvement in four core areas:

- Establishing high, challenging learning standards aligned with readiness for college and careers, and transforming instructional practices to enable students to meet the more challenging expectations;
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools;
- Developing and supporting effective teachers and leaders; and
- Creating data systems and using technology to inform and enhance instruction.

Race to the Top incentivized states to build comprehensive plans to break down silos in their education systems and take a unified approach in addressing these priorities, and rewarded states for enlisting their districts and key stakeholders in designing and implementing their plans.

Impact of Race to the Top

In 2010, 11 states and D.C. won the Race to the Top competition and received awards ranging from \$75 million to \$700 million to make system-wide education improvements for teachers and students. In 2011, an additional seven states received a share of the \$200 million to advance targeted reforms aimed at improving student achievement. In the states that received a share of the 2010 grants, we have seen real improvements in student outcomes.

Overall, Race to the Top states saw significant improvements in the ability of their state systems to support comprehensive educational improvement. Specifically, Race to the Top

states each saw improvements in the core areas of the grant, including:

- **Raising Standards:** Every Race to the Top state adopted and implemented challenging K-12 academic content standards to prepare students for success in college and careers. Professional development and teacher-led teams to create tools and resources helped teachers to understand the standards and how best to implement them in their classrooms.
- **Improving Low-Performing Schools:** States increased stakeholder engagement, created performance management approaches to help districts support effective interventions in their lowest-performing schools and, in some instances, created networks of those schools, which improved supports for teachers and school and district leaders and resulted in improved student outcomes.
- **Supporting and Creating Pathways for Teachers:** States created rigorous evaluation and support systems designed to give meaningful feedback to teachers and school leaders, reward effective teachers and principals, and provide pathways for career growth.
- **Creating High-Quality Data Systems:** States made critical investments in improving systems to compile student outcome data and several states led by creating integrated data systems to provide a range of tailored resources and information for different audiences, including parents and teachers.
- **Rigorous Coursework:** Race to the Top states saw an 8 percent increase in the number of Advancement Placement (AP) exams taken and a 28.5 percent increase in



Without Race to the Top dollars, North Carolina's public schools would have been stalled during the Great Recession. Not only did Race to the Top allow us to implement new standards, new assessments, strengthened support for teachers and students but we also were able to create a statewide digital teaching and learning toolkit—Home Base—for all public schools in North Carolina. The Race to the Top funds allowed us to be innovative and move forward during a very challenging economic time.



— DR. JUNE ST. CLAIR ATKINSON
State Superintendent of Education, North Carolina

the number of students who scored high enough to qualify for college credit between 2011 and 2015.

Race to the Top's impact extended beyond those 18 states and D.C. that were awarded money for the grant, as evidenced by the 34 states that changed their policies to improve their chances of winning grants. And a recent analysis from Professor William Howell at the University of Chicago demonstrated that all states experienced a marked surge in the adoption of policies in the wake of Race to the Top. Legislators from all states reported that Race to the Top affected policy deliberations within their states.

By leveraging less than 1 percent of annual education spending, President Obama succeeded in dramatically reforming state education policies and improving systems for states to support districts, schools, teachers and, most importantly, students.

Focus on Evidence-Based Innovation

As states, districts, and schools strengthened their approach to teaching and learning through Race to the Top, the Obama administration also has sought to build their capacity to drive innovation and adopt evidence-based practices to more rapidly transform day-to-day classroom realities. By focusing on innovation and evidence, the administration's aim was to create new supports and partnerships that would enable educators to tackle persistent challenges, improve outcomes for underserved students, and accelerate improvement across the sector.

These ambitious aims led to the launch of the i3 fund, a first-of-its-kind grant program to support efforts in research and development in public education. The i3 program was designed to address the dual challenges of innovation and evidence by establishing a "tiered-evidence" framework that rewards applicants for the rigor of the research upon which their strategies are based. School districts or nonprofits with a promising innovation can refine their models through smaller i3 "Development" grants, and seek larger grants in the "Validation" and "Scale-up" categories as they expand their impact and prove the effectiveness of their approaches. Another unique feature of i3's model is that every project must partner with an independent researcher to assess the project's impact on student achievement, and share the findings broadly so that all educators benefit from the lessons learned. By rigorously evaluating each project, the Department of Education is helping identify strategies that enable students to excel, and that educators could adopt in other contexts—expanding what the field is learning from federal investments.

“Through i3, educators are dramatically improving outcomes for students, and we are committed to providing teachers and school leaders with the resources they need to continue this important work.”

— JOHN B. KING, JR.
U.S. Secretary of Education.

Over the course of six grant competitions, i3 has invested more than \$1.3 billion in 157 projects reaching millions of students in all 50 states and D.C. Each i3 project also received matching funds from the private sector totaling over \$200 million in commitments from national philanthropies, businesses, and community organizations. Despite these robust public and private investments, the demand for i3 awards continues to far outpace supply.

In 2016, the Department of Education will run the seventh and final i3 competition to accommodate the transition to ESSA in 2017. The new education law recognizes the value President Obama has placed on advancing innovation and evidence-based strategies that are the core of i3 by authorizing its successor: the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program. The "tiered-evidence" framework established by i3 also informs several other evidence provisions in the law to help states and districts direct their investments toward effective practices.

Evidence-Based Successes

Current i3 grantees are conducting evaluations that demonstrate that many i3 grantees are improving student outcomes. As importantly, they are learning valuable lessons that are relevant to educators in communities across the country. Some examples of i3 successes include:

- **Reading Recovery:** Through a \$45 million "Scale-up" grant, the Ohio State University's Reading Recovery program trained more than 3,700 teachers in its early literacy model. Reading Recovery teachers provide struggling first-grade readers with one-on-one tutoring by highly trained, certified teachers for 30 minutes daily for a three-to-five-month period. A randomized controlled trial found that Reading Recovery students gained an additional 1.6 months of learning, a growth rate that is 31 percent faster than the national average for beginning first graders. According to researcher Philip Sirinides, the effect size was "among the largest for any intervention for early literacy that has been rigorously studied."

- **STEM Public-Private Partnership in Georgia:** Using its \$3 million “Development” grant, Carroll County Schools in east Georgia expanded a partnership with Southwire, a leading manufacturer of electrical wire and cable, to offer real-world learning opportunities in STEM fields to disadvantaged students using its i3 grant. The program targets students at the highest risk of dropping out, and the graduation rate for participating students is over 10 percentage points higher than the district rate.
- **College Readiness in Colorado and Indiana:** With a \$15 million “Validation” grant, the National Math and Science Initiative’s College Readiness Program helped enroll more than 6,300 students in college-level AP courses in Colorado and Indiana. For schools in the first cohort, the number of AP passing scores on math, science, and English exams increased considerably in the first year. In 2015, this program received an i3 “Scale-up” grant to expand these efforts in partnership with 40 additional schools in eight states.
- **Scaling Up Teach For America (TFA):** Using a \$50 million “Scale-up” grant, TFA was able to launch a major expansion effort with the goal of partnering with 148 local school districts to grow its teacher corps by more than 80 percent by placing 13,500 teachers, serving 850,000 students in high-needs schools in classrooms by the 2014-2015 school

year. A rigorous evaluation of the program was recently released to assess the effectiveness of TFA elementary school teachers who were recruited and trained in the second year of the i3 Scale-up grant. The study found that, on average, these TFA elementary school teachers, who averaged 1.7 years of experience, were as effective as non-TFA teachers, who averaged 13.6 years of experience in both math and reading. In certain grades and subjects—specifically, pre-kindergarten through second grade reading, TFA teachers were more effective than their more experienced counterparts. There was a positive, statistically significant effect on student reading achievement equivalent to about 1.3 additional months of learning.

The portfolio of i3 grantees also is outperforming innovative efforts in other sectors. For example, in a review of studies of new products or strategies launched by Microsoft and Google, between 80 to 90 percent of the studied business innovations had no significant effects. Based on the initial results from the first cohort of i3 grantees, the i3 portfolio’s success rate will far exceed those expectations.

The i3 program has served as a model across the federal government for promoting innovation, and generating and expanding evidence-based solutions to complex challenges.

Sample of Initial Results from 2010 i3 Validation Grants

Grantee	Award	Project Design	Evaluation Findings
Children’s Literacy Initiative (CLI)	\$21.7 million	Implement CLI’s “model” classrooms, including professional development and support, in 39 schools	Positive, statistically significant impacts equivalent to two months of additional learning by second grade
Denver Public Schools	\$25.1 million	Expand collaborative strategic reading initiative in middle schools	More than doubled goals for scaling, and participating students performed significantly better on state writing tests
George Mason University	\$28.5 million	Provide intensive professional development to science teachers	Teachers in grades four through six showed greater understanding of problem-based learning instruction
Smithsonian Institution	\$25.2 million	Refine the LASER model for improving science instruction in three states	Elementary and middle school students performed significantly better on a standardized assessment of science tasks
University of Missouri	\$12.3 million	Improve professional development for educators in rural, low-income schools	Enrolled teachers scored significantly higher on classroom observations, and students performed better in math
Utah State University	\$15.3 million	Expand the K-3 Smart Start Plus Model of extended school year and small classes	Students who participated in four years of summer programming performed better in reading, math, and writing
WestEd	\$18.2 million	Expand the Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE) model	Students of RAISE teachers showed significant improvement in writing argumentation, and participating teachers were more likely to use practices that foster student independence and collaboration

Through i3, educators have been empowered to realize their innovative ideas and adopt practices that are grounded in rigorous research. Under ESSA, the Department of Education will continue leveraging innovation and evidence-based approaches to help schools and educators achieve better outcomes for their students.

Race to the Top—District-Level Competition

The Race to the Top model also included a program that invested a half billion dollars in 21 organizations representing 68 districts, 30,000 educators, and 440,000 students across the country. Race to the Top-District grants helped districts personalize students' learning experiences, create new roles for teacher leaders, provide students with an array of opportunities to access rigorous academic content, positively change the culture within schools, and scale practices that had previously lived with individual teachers.

For instance, in Middletown, New York, which won a Race to the Top-District grant in 2012, the district has implemented a blended learning model, integrating technology into the classroom using a digital platform for the delivery of academic content and relying on teachers to use performance data to guide instruction and learning. Middletown has seen real progress—students in blended classrooms out-performed those in non-blended classrooms by as much as 45 percent in reading and 56 percent in math, and surpassed their growth targets by 18 percent in math and 36 percent in reading. In addition, using Race to the Top-District funds, Middletown provided free college tuition for all students to the Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA). Prior to Race to the Top, 7 percent or fewer Middletown high school students were taking college courses during high school; in 2015, more than 25 percent of the graduating class did.

Race to the Top programs catalyzed a wave of reforms and the impact of the program will be felt in improved systems across the country well beyond the end of the Obama administration. Across the various Race to the Top programs, education leaders have made enduring changes to public education systems that are improving the ability of schools and educators to better focus on enhancing student learning.

Next Generation High Schools

Since 2008, we have cut the rate of dropout factory high schools nearly in half. However, President Obama recognizes that we must do more to engage, prepare, and inspire college- and career-ready students, and align high school learning to the experiences and opportunities that matter in young people's lives, as they enter postsecondary education and the workforce. Preparing young adults for success requires

Dropout rate fell by 17% from 2009 to 2014

That equates to more than 500,000 people staying in school.



a new educational experience that looks different than it did a generation ago. That is why the Obama administration supports redesigning and rethinking America's high schools and has taken steps throughout the administration to expose more students to learning that links their studies in school to future college and career pathways—especially in the critically important STEM fields.

Next Generation High Schools not only provide students with the academic foundation and skills they need to be successful, but also ensure students have the opportunity to participate in project- or problem-based learning, earn early college credit, and engage in experiences or postsecondary learning opportunities that build career-ready competencies. Accomplishing these goals will help improve longer term outcomes for high school students, including increased high school graduation rates, higher rates of enrollment in postsecondary studies without the need to take remedial courses, higher postsecondary completion rates, and higher rates of completion of industry-recognized credentials and certifications. These models have been shown through rigorous evaluations to produce long-term economic benefits. An MDRC evaluation using random assignment in nine high schools across the U.S. found that Career Academies produced sustained earnings gains that averaged 11 percent (or \$2,088) more per year for Academy group members than for individuals in the non-Academy group, which equated to a \$16,704 boost in total earnings over the eight years of follow-up (in 2006 dollars).

That is why in the President's 2013 State of the Union address, the President laid out a new vision for America's high schools,

proposing funding to scale-up innovative high school models and partnerships with colleges and employers so that all students graduate better equipped for the demands of the innovation economy. These models aim to strengthen America's high schools by supporting stronger partnerships to expand access to rigorous coursework, support personalized learning, provide students with the chance to build work-based competencies, and allow for innovative approaches regarding the use of time to drive student achievement.

Through his budget request for Fiscal Year 2017, President Obama has asked Congress to fund an \$80 million competitive program to help districts create innovative high school models to personalize teaching, promote active learning for students, and provide deep ties to post-secondary education to build the rigorous and relevant education needed for students to succeed.

The administration also has called on the private and public sectors to take action. The White House Summit on Next Generation High Schools announced an answer to that call: \$375 million in private and public sector commitments to advance Next Generation High Schools. These commitments—including \$200 million from the Nellie Mae Foundation's New England 2020 initiative to accelerate student-centered approaches for learning in New England and \$25 million from the Carnegie Foundation in support of newly designed school models and system-level change—represent a national movement to expand Next Generation High Schools that the Obama administration will continue to build on in the months to come.

“*Today's high school students are the future leaders of America—our next generation of entrepreneurs, scientists and educators. But they will only fulfill these roles if they are equipped to thrive in a hyper-connected, digital society. President Obama's focus on transforming dropout factories—high schools where no more than 60 percent of students graduate—and his commitment to reimagine and invigorate our high schools, especially those where millions of students can be the first in their families to graduate from college, will improve achievement and give our children the best possible chance in life.*”

— LAURENE POWELL JOBS
President, Emerson Collective

Promise Neighborhoods

Since his time serving in the United States Senate, President Obama has advocated for building “cradle-to-career” networks of strong schools and community supports in high-poverty neighborhoods grappling with interrelated issues such as disinvestment, crime, and underperforming schools. The approach to addressing the issues collaboratively, often referred to as a “place-based” or “collective impact” approach, is inspired by the success of initiatives like the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)—the pioneering nonprofit founded by Geoffrey Canada in New York City. HCZ informed the creation of the Obama administration's Promise Neighborhoods program, which targets communities in distressed urban, rural, and suburban areas.

The Promise Neighborhoods program supports schools, in partnership with local public and private organizations, to make progress toward meeting the needs of families in a community's most distressed areas. While this kind of coordination requires a significant upfront investment, the administration believes that the long-term potential for impact is tremendous. The encouraging gains that are emerging from Promise Neighborhoods grantees across the country is one reason why, Promise Neighborhoods is now part of ESSA, the nation's new federal education law.

Vision of Promise

The Promise Neighborhoods program established a common set of principles—investing in disadvantaged areas, increasing collaboration at the federal and local levels, and ensuring shared accountability—for schools and community partners to solve challenges in their neighborhoods and ultimately improve outcomes for students. These principles help ensure that Promise Neighborhoods are aligned in their approach even if they face different obstacles in their work (e.g., the rural setting of the Indianola Promise Neighborhood necessitates a different set of solutions than the Eastside Promise Neighborhood in San Antonio). In each Promise Neighborhood, the grantee serves as an “anchor institution” that coordinates among schools, social service organizations, healthcare providers, and community programs. This approach encourages organizations to break down silos, so that they become more responsive to the children and families that they serve.

Since 2010, more than 500 organizations have applied to become Promise Neighborhoods. To help communities prepare to take on the challenges of leading place-based initiatives, the Department of Education issued 21 planning grants in 2010 that encouraged collaboration and capacity building. Since 2010, the Department's Promise Neighborhoods competitions have invested nearly \$270

million in planning and implementation grants in more than 50 of our nation's most distressed communities, representing over 700 schools. These Promise Neighborhoods grantees are creating robust networks of community solutions that are leading to important gains for children and families.

The success of Promise Neighborhoods also helped develop and launch the administration's Promise Zones initiative to accelerate revitalization efforts in high-poverty urban, rural, and tribal communities. Promise Zones pairs the federal government with local leaders who are addressing multiple community revitalization challenges in a collaborative way and have demonstrated a commitment to creating jobs, leveraging private investment, increasing economic activity, expanding educational opportunities, and reducing violent crime, as well as other locally defined goals.

Impact of Promise

Across the Promise Neighborhoods implementation grantees, educators are observing results. Where data is currently available, projects are demonstrating some concrete signs of progress and impact, but also are identifying other areas where they will need to focus their efforts. Among the successes in the 2013-2014 school year, for example, grantees produced:

- An increase of 5 percentage points in English/language arts scores in high school grades;
- An increase of 10 percentage points in math scores in elementary grades; and
- A decrease of 6 percentage points in chronic absenteeism for students attending schools within a Promise Neighborhood.

In the Mississippi Delta, for example, the Indianola Promise Neighborhood is collaborating with the Sunflower County Consolidated School District, the University of Memphis, and several other community partners to improve outcomes for children. By aligning its efforts and focusing on early childhood education, the Indianola Promise Neighborhood is seeing striking results, including:

- An 18-percent increase in kindergarten readiness from fall 2013 to fall 2014;
- Nearly three in four students who receive services demonstrated no summer learning loss, as compared with the national average of students from low-income backgrounds losing more than two months in reading achievement; and
- Nearly closing the gap on state reading and math tests between Indianola Promise Neighborhood third graders and their peers statewide.

I am delighted to see the inclusion of Promise Neighborhoods to the ESEA. It's a historic addition recognizing the need for a comprehensive approach to educating our most vulnerable children.

– GEOFFREY CANADA
President, Harlem Children's Zone

The administration's investment in Promise Neighborhoods is paying off not only by improving educational and developmental outcomes for children, but also by strengthening community organizations' infrastructure and coordination. In 2016, the Department of Education will award new Promise Neighborhoods grants to support more schools and organizations working to build cradle-to-career solutions that bring opportunity within reach for all children. As Promise Neighborhoods deploy creative strategies to better serve children and families, they are proving that strategic, public and private investments can help families overcome the inertia of poverty and other challenging circumstances. In addition, the Promise Neighborhoods program was included in ESSA, paving the way for the program to continue to make an impact in the years to come.

School Improvement Grants

Since 2010, the SIG program has been an important part of the Obama administration's strategy for helping states and districts turn around the nation's lowest-performing schools. The SIG program has provided funding to more than 1,500 of the country's lowest-performing schools, which have demonstrated both the greatest needs and the strongest commitment to implementing rigorous reforms that can raise student achievement.

Over the course of the Obama administration, Congress has appropriated slightly more than \$7 billion to support these schools. Many of the schools have made substantial progress increasing graduation rates and improving student achievement. Using Recovery Act funding, the Department of Education narrowed that focus to schools that were in the bottom 5 percent of performance and had been low performing for an extended period of time. Generally, SIG schools employed one of four school turnaround models identified by the Department of Education for improvement in 2010.

Impact of School Improvement Grants

The most rigorous evidence we have of the impact of SIG comes from the first three cohorts of SIG. These schools began implementing reforms in the 2010–2011, 2011–2012, and 2012–2013 school years. Analysis by the Department of Education has found that Cohort 1 schools, which had implemented SIG reforms for three years (2010–2011 to 2012–2013), increased the percentage of their students who are proficient in math by 8 percentage points and by 6 percentage points in reading. In Cohort 2 schools, the increase was 5 percentage points in math and 4 in reading over two years of SIG implementation (2011–2012 to 2012–2013).

In addition, nearly 50 percent of Cohort 1 high schools and 38 percent of Cohort 2 high schools increased their adjusted cohort graduation rates (ACGRs) by 6 or more percentage points from 2010–2011 to 2012–2013.

A separate analysis by the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) in 2015 found that SIG schools in the largest urban school districts in the country reduced the percentage of students in the lowest-proficiency levels on state assessments. It also found that the gap of students scoring at or above proficient for English language arts and reading on state assessments between SIG schools and two comparison groups (SIG-eligible schools that did not receive grants and non-SIG-eligible schools) narrowed in the first two years of the grant and then leveled off. Because these schools were the most in need of significant improvement, overall performance often remained low even after three years of federal investment, however, the CGCS report found that for Cohort 1, “there was particularly strong progress among the lowest-achieving students in these SIG schools.”

SIG also has offered a rich set of case studies showing how school improvement can be done well, which are important tools for schools and districts. In 2014, the Department of Education began releasing profiles of state-, district-, and school-level strategies employed by SIG grantees to build capacity for turning around the lowest-performing schools. These strategies include:

- **Ensuring Committed and Qualified Staff in Massachusetts:** Orchard Gardens in Roxbury, Mass., had struggled with staff turnover and persistently low student achievement. By empowering the principal to have autonomy in staffing the school, including hiring teachers who have competencies that best meet student needs, and empowering teachers to guide school-wide instructional improvement by actively participating in and driving decisions about curriculum and instruction, Orchard Gardens made substantial gains. In fact, from 2009–2010 to 2010–2011, Orchard Garden’s student test scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive

Assessment System jumped from 20 percent proficient to 30 percent proficient in reading, and from 20 percent proficient to 34 percent proficient in math. Those improvements have been sustained: in 2014, 32 percent of students were proficient in reading and 40 percent were proficient in math.

- **Creating a Principal Pipeline in Washington, D.C.:** The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) received 16 SIG grants in Cohorts 1 and 2, but were faced with a leadership challenge—they did not have enough qualified principals to lead the schools. DCPS solved this problem by creating a leadership framework to establish common expectations for its school principals, increasing support to principals through the hiring of additional instructional superintendents, pairing SIG principals with experienced principals to serve as partners, creating data-driven leadership development, and creating a fellowship to identify and develop current DCPS staff for principal positions.

The Future of School Improvement

Supporting and improving these low performing schools remains a key priority for the Obama administration, and there is concrete evidence that many SIG schools were able to use the resources with which they were provided to improve student achievement. The administration’s prioritization of significant resources to support change in the very lowest-performing schools will continue. As part of ESSA, states are required to set aside dedicated Title I funding for school improvement purposes. The law also requires this dedicated funding to be targeted to support the lowest-performing schools. ESSA also reflects the administration’s approach to school improvement by ensuring that states identify and support the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools and high schools where 67 percent or fewer students do not graduate on time. The President’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget affirms the Obama administration’s commitment to supporting the lowest-



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performing schools by including authority to allocate a portion (50 percent of the funds above the authorized funding level, which is \$174 million) of the requested increase to the Title I program for states to use on school improvement activities.

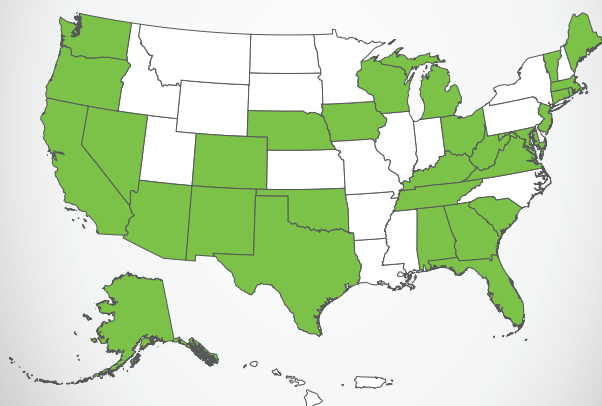
Advancing Preschool for All and Investing in All Children

President Obama knows what families, early educators, economists, and researchers across America know—high-quality early childhood education provides children with a foundation for success in school and puts them on a path toward realizing their full potential. Supporting children during this critical stage of development yields long-lasting benefits, particularly for low-income children who often start kindergarten behind their peers in areas like early literacy and early math skills. Research indicates that children who participate in high-quality early education are more likely to grow up reading, writing, and doing math at grade level; graduate from high school; hold a job; and even form more stable families. They also are less likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

That is why the President put forth his bold Preschool for All proposal in his 2013 State of the Union address to establish a federal-state partnership that would provide high-quality preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families. While Congress has not yet enacted the President’s full proposal, they have made a down payment on expanding high-quality preschool through the Preschool Development Grants program and, for the first time, authorized a preschool program as part of the bipartisan ESSA.

Expansion in Preschool Enrollment

30 States Increased Their Preschool Enrollment from 2009-2014



The enrollment figures are between 2009-10 through 2013-14

Source: NIEER State of Preschool 2010 and 2014 (<http://nieer.org/publications/annual-state-pre-k-reports-state-preschool-yearbooks>).

“ *Helping every child to access high-quality early learning programs is one of the most important investments we can make in our country’s future. We know that learning begins at birth and the preparation for learning begins before birth, so the earlier we can prepare our students to succeed, the more likely they are to continue in their education and climb the ladder of opportunity. That is why I built on the President’s Preschool for All framework in writing the Strong Start for America’s Children Act.* ”

– TOM HARKIN
Former Chairman, Senate Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions Committee

The President also challenged more states, local communities, and the private sector to join this effort—and many have responded. Cities and states across the country—led by Democratic and Republican leaders alike— and their private sector partners, have taken up the President’s call to action and invested in expanding high-quality early childhood education. As a result, more children have a strong start that prepares them to excel in school and beyond. Additionally, during the last Congress, members supported bipartisan legislation based on the President’s Preschool for All proposal, the Strong Start for America’s Children Act. That bill, cosponsored by 177 members of Congress, also received broad support from a diverse group of stakeholders including parents, educators, researchers, business leaders, law enforcement, and local and state lawmakers.

Federal Expansion of High-Quality Preschool

The President has made early childhood education a centerpiece of his domestic agenda since day one. Under the Obama administration, we have increased funding for the largest early childhood program, Head Start, by over \$4 billion, and used those investments to boost the quality and increase the number of young children who have access to Head Start.

President Obama also launched the new Preschool Development Grants to support states in developing and expanding public preschool. In its first three years, this program has made it possible for 230 high-needs communities to provide more than 100,000 additional children with access to high-quality preschool. Each grantee

is engaging in this important work in ways that meet the needs of local communities, for instance:

- **Investing in Quality Data to Inform Practice in Alabama:** The Alabama Office of School Readiness deploys regional coaching specialists across the state to support the professional development of early educators. These specialists provide individualized reflective coaching and mentoring in different tiers of intensity and frequency, informed by teacher- and program-level data.
- **Building Capacity in Arizona:** Working with community organizations and school districts, the Arizona Department of Education is strengthening its early childhood education infrastructure in three ways: providing scholarships for high-level coursework leading to teacher certification; working with institutes of higher education to build capacity of instructors and counselors; and effectively using the state longitudinal data system.
- **Expanding High-Quality, Inclusive Preschool in Rural Nevada:** Nevada has many families living in rural communities and, so, is using funding to expand high-quality, preschool to children and families in the most remote frontier counties of Nye, Lyon, and Churchill. Because of these investments, children—including children with disabilities—have greater access to inclusive, high-quality preschool opportunities that will prepare them to excel in school.

Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge

The Race to the Top model also was used to support states seeking to improve substantially the quality of early learning and development programs for children from birth through age 5 through the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge and to support districts as they implement bold, personalized strategies to improve student achievement.

In addition, the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge has invested more than \$1 billion to help 20 states design and implement an integrated and cohesive system of high-quality early learning programs and services for young children and their families. The program, which the President requested as a part of his Fiscal Year 2011 budget, was designed to align and improve the quality of early learning and development programs for young children and increase the number of children with high needs in high-quality early learning programs. All 20 states that won grants over the three years of competitions significantly increased the number of programs providing measurably higher quality early education for children with high needs. In these states, which account for nearly half of children with high-needs in the country, the number of programs enrolled in the Early Learning Challenge

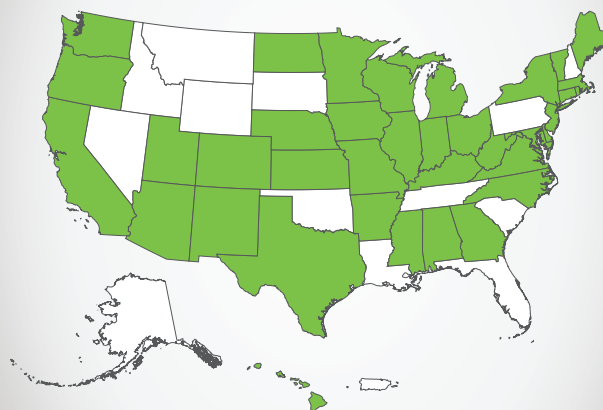
states’ quality rating system has increased by 70 percent, from 37,630 at the start of their grants to 63,985 programs in 2014. There was a 63-percent increase in the number of programs designated as high quality by states, from the start of the grants to 2014. There also was a 175-percent increase in the number of children enrolled in early learning programs designated as high quality by states. California is one state that has seen dramatic gains. According to California’s 2014 Annual Performance Report, in 2012, 475 programs were in its quality rating system, and, by the end of 2014, this number increased 470 percent to 2,232 sites. In 2012, 475 programs were in the state’s quality rating system, and, by 2015, this number increased 590 percent to 3,278 sites. This means that in 2012, 1,565 children were enrolled in settings determined to be of high quality, and, by 2015, the number had increased to 124,734.

While the first cohort of nine states completed its four-year grants at the end of 2015, all states continue to show measurable impacts for vulnerable children and families.

Early Learning Challenge states have used multiple strategies to drive reform such as bringing together child care, Head Start, and public and private preschool into one system where the quality of programs are assessed and improved. They also have built out specific components of these systems, including family engagement, linkages to the health system, data tracking, career pathways and competencies for teachers, and methods to measure children’s progress. Additional markers of progress have been achieved in these areas along the way. For example, there was a 26 percent increase in the number of children who

Expansion in Preschool Investment

38 states and Washington, DC increased investments in Pre-K totaling more than \$1.5 billion



The funding is between FY2013 and FY2016

Source: Education Commission of the States, Preschool Funding Reports, FY14, FY15, FY16.
2013-2014: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/03/54/11034.pdf>
2014-2015: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/16/97/11697.pdf>
2015-2016: http://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/01252016_Prek-K_Funding_report_revised_02022016.pdf

receive a developmental screening, resulting in more than 150,000 additional children who received a screening.

State and Local Action to Expand Preschool

After President Obama made his call for Preschool for All, states and cities took action to expand access to high-quality preschool and early childhood education. Indeed, since 2013, 38 states and D.C. have increased their funding for preschool. Overall, states have increased their investments by more than \$1.5 billion since the President's call. This past school year alone, states invested nearly \$7 billion in public preschool, an increase of 12 percent or \$767 million from last year. Cities also have taken leading roles in expanding public preschool—New York City and Seattle are leading the way in giving more of our youngest learners the early learning experiences they need to thrive.

Private Public Collaborations to Invest in US

In December 2014, in response to the President's call to action to encourage investment in preschool and early childhood education, the White House announced \$330 million in new actions from corporate and philanthropic leaders to expand the reach and enhance the quality of early education for thousands of additional children. Since then, the White House has participated in Invest in US regional events designed to highlight progress being made in early childhood education across the country including in Washington, D.C. and Columbus, Ohio.

Over the course of the President's time in office, he mobilized state and local governments, and their private sector collaborators to double down on their efforts to expand access to high-quality early education. He worked with Congress to

increase federal funding. He improved and expanded the largest preschool program in the country, Head Start. He launched the Early Learning Challenge to help states build their early childhood systems and ensure that children with the highest needs have access to the highest-quality experiences. And he launched the Preschool Development Grants program to build on states' work to increase access to high-quality preschool. As a result, hundreds of thousands of children with high needs are in higher quality programs and tens of thousands of additional children are receiving the early experiences that will set them up for success in school and beyond.

ConnectED and Future Ready

Technology can be a powerful tool for transforming learning experiences. It can help our nation's schools and educators expand access to high-quality resources and expertise, shrink long-standing equity and accessibility gaps, reinvent approaches to collaboration, and support teachers in adapting learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners.

In a country where we expect free Wi-Fi with our coffee, the least we can do is expect that our schools are properly wired.

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
February 4, 2014

Today, there are too many children in America that enter school not ready to learn, including more than half of disadvantaged children. Through the Invest in US initiative, government at all levels, business leaders, philanthropy, and the early childhood community came together to make historic investments that are giving countless more kids a chance at a strong start. Like President Obama, the business community and elected leaders alike know that when we invest in them, we invest in us.

— KRIS PERRY
Executive Director, First Five Years Fund (the nonprofit organization that powers Invest in US)

Concerted federal, state, and local efforts over the last two decades have brought some level of Internet connectivity to the front door of nearly every school and library in the country. But in most cases, access to the Internet was severely limited to a small fraction of those who wished to use it, and connection speeds fell far short of providing our schools, classrooms, and teachers with the digital connectivity and tools necessary to supply all of our students with a world-class education. In fact, nearly half of respondents to a survey of schools and districts by the FCC in 2010 reported lower speed connectivity than the average American home, and more than half of teachers surveyed reported that slow or unreliable Internet access prevented effective use of technology in their classrooms. These challenges are even more profound in rural and tribal communities, where connectivity is slower and more expensive.

At the same time, more than two thirds of teachers today say they would like more technology in their classrooms, and roughly half say that lack of training is one of the biggest barriers to incorporating technology into their teaching. District

leaders also express a lack of professional learning resources to help them effectively envision and manage a large-scale transition to digital learning.

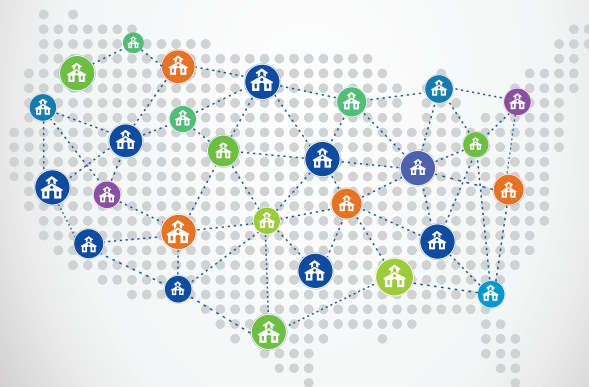
Connecting Schools and Students

To address these challenges, President Obama launched the ConnectED initiative, setting a goal of connecting 99 percent of students to next-generation broadband by 2018 and calling on the private sector to provide digital learning devices and high-quality, low-cost digital content for teachers and students. The ConnectED initiative also calls for an investment in professional learning for leaders and educators so teachers enter classrooms ready to use digital tools to support personalized learning, tailored to the unique needs and interests of students. The results to date have been dramatic:

- **Revamping Federal Support for Schools and Libraries:** The FCC modernized its E-Rate program, which subsidizes broadband connectivity to schools and libraries. This has made billions of dollars available to provide high-speed access to millions of students. Before E-Rate modernization, 30 percent of school districts serving 4 million students offered students access to high-speed Internet. Now, because of reforms undertaken by the FCC to the E-Rate program, 77 percent of school districts reaching 24.5 million students offer access to high-speed Internet. It also provided new avenues for rural and disadvantaged communities to build out core infrastructure.
- **Encouraging Innovation from the Private Sector:** The Obama administration has worked with the private sector to provide access to cutting-edge digital tools and bring down the cost of providing digital learning devices to schools, as well as learning resources for teachers and students that are price-competitive with print-based materials, such as textbooks. Since 2014, key ConnectED collaborators have committed more than \$2 billion in hardware, software, and connectivity now in use in thousands of schools.
- **Increasing Access to High-Quality, Low-Cost Digital Content:** In October 2015, the Department of Education launched #GoOpen to expand the use of high-quality, openly licensed educational resources in K-12 schools. Fifteen states and dozens of districts committed to using openly licensed educational resources (OER) in their schools in place of static textbooks. Education technology companies and nonprofit organizations also committed to develop tools and resources to help educators transition to using OER, which can increase equity by providing all students with access to high-quality, up-to-date learning materials.
- **Providing Opportunities for Anytime Learning:** In April 2015, President Obama highlighted the ConnectED Library

The Connectivity Divide in Schools Was Cut in Half.

In 2015, 77% of school districts met the 100 kbps per student goal. Only 30% of school districts did in 2013.



Challenge and Open eBooks. The library challenge is a collaborative effort among mayors, library directors, and superintendents that is providing hundreds of thousands more students with access to library resources in rural towns and major urban areas. The Open eBooks App, created by a coalition of literacy, library, publishing, and technology organizations, places thousands of popular and award-winning eBooks at the fingertips of students who don't have access to books at home. To address the problem of the "homework gap,"—the reality that too many U.S. lower-income children may go unplugged every afternoon when school ends—President Obama announced ConnectHome in July 2015 in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide public and assisted housing residents in 27 cities and one tribal nation with the support they need to access the Internet at home. The initiative brings together nonprofits and the private sector to offer free or low-cost broadband access, technical training, digital literacy programs, and devices that will initially reach over 275,000 low-income households—and nearly 200,000 children.

- **Investing in Future Ready Leaders:** President Obama launched the Future Ready Initiative at the White House in 2014, highlighting the critical role of district leaders in setting a vision and creating the environment where educators and students can access the tools, content, and expertise necessary to thrive in a connected world. Joined by 100 school superintendents in the East Room of the White House, along with a commitment from an additional 1,100 superintendents, the President announced an effort to assist school leaders in their transition to digital learning by taking the Future Ready Pledge. Superintendents who

take the pledge agree to: foster a culture of learning through technology across schools; assist their students and families in the transition to high-speed connectivity; provide students with greater access to high-quality digital devices and content; and provide teachers and principals the support needed to use technology in innovative ways. Future Ready is a critical part of the broader ConnectED initiative because it enlists and relies on the leaders who most directly drive change at the district level. Since its launch, more than 2,100 superintendents have signed the Future Ready Pledge and 17 states have launched statewide initiatives to make transformative learning experiences available to more than 16 million students.

Progress in Providing Connectivity

Across the country, under the Obama administration, there has been real progress toward ensuring that every school has high-speed connectivity as a foundation for other learning innovations. Since President Obama announced the ConnectED Initiative in 2013, an additional 20 million students have been connected to high-speed broadband in their classrooms and the initiative is on track to connect 99 percent of students by 2018. Students also have increasing access to digital tools and devices. Approximately 5 million students are taking advantage of devices, software, and digital tools provided free of charge by companies that have responded to the President's challenge. The cost of digital devices has decreased dramatically, while computing power has increased, along with the investment in and availability of high-quality interactive educational tools and apps.

There also has been a dramatic transformation in how district superintendents are empowering educators and engaging their communities to set a new vision for technology to support learning. The Future Ready Initiative has assembled a coalition of more than 44 national and 12 regional partner organizations dedicated to making sure that vision becomes practice to transform the learning of all students. In 2015, over 500 district teams participated in two-day regional summits and over 800 district teams completed a Future Ready comprehensive needs assessment and launched their strategic plans.

In his final year in office, President Obama continues his work to ensure that all students have access to the fast broadband connections, modern devices, and new digital teaching tools they need to ensure they can thrive at school, at home, in college, and in the workplace. In addition, the administration continues to work with public and private organizations to build capacity among leaders and educators across the country so they are able to confidently lead the transition to transformative learning experiences powered by technology for all students.

Strengthening Rigor in Career and Technical Education

In his 2012 State of the Union address, President Obama laid out a blueprint for an economy that is built to last. The President's plan affirmed that the strength of the American economy is inextricably linked to the strength of America's education system. American employers need a workforce that is skilled, creative, and equipped for success in the global marketplace. And our students need a rigorous, relevant education to acquire the skills to compete for good jobs, enter a growing middle class, and lead thriving lives.

You see, an economy built to last is one where we encourage the talent and ingenuity of every person in this country. ... It means we should support everyone who's willing to work, and every risk-taker and entrepreneur who aspires to become the next Steve Jobs.

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
January 24, 2012

High-quality career and technical education (CTE) is a valuable pathway for preparing students for college and careers. These programs build strong academic and technical skills, but also transferable employability skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, and teamwork. The Obama administration has taken many steps to scale up rigorous CTE programs across the nation. Among them have been developing a blueprint for transforming CTE, establishing a U.S. Presidential Scholars in CTE Program, and establishing the Youth CareerConnect program.

Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education

The \$1.13 billion Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 is the nation's largest federal investment in secondary and postsecondary CTE. Perkins Act programs leverage other components of a broader education and career pathways system that includes K-12 and postsecondary education, workforce development and job training, adult education, and health and human services to prepare students for college and careers. However, students, parents, teachers, and employers know that there are too few high-quality CTE programs in existence today.

In response, the Obama administration developed a blueprint for a reauthorized Perkins Act, aimed at transforming CTE and ushering in a new era of rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE shaped by four core principles:

- **Alignment:** Effective alignment between high-quality CTE programs and labor market needs to equip students with 21st-century skills and prepare them for in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors;
- **Collaboration:** Strong collaborations and partnerships among secondary and postsecondary institutions, employers, and industry partners to improve the quality of CTE programs;
- **Accountability:** Meaningful accountability for improving academic outcomes and building technical and employability skills in CTE programs for all students, based upon common definitions and clear metrics for performance; and
- **Innovation:** Increased emphasis on innovation to drive quality supported by systemic reform of state policies and practices to support CTE implementation of effective practices at the local level.

The Obama administration’s proposal for a reauthorized Perkins Act reflects a commitment to promoting equity and quality across these efforts to ensure that more students have access to quality CTE programs. The administration’s proposal would use a combination of technical assistance, competition, and a system of structured rewards to ensure that more students, regardless of background or circumstance, have access to high-quality CTE programs.

U. S. Presidential Scholars in Career and Technical Education

In support of expanding high-quality CTE across the country, in June 2015, President Obama signed an Executive Order expanding the United States Presidential Scholars program to establish a new category of outstanding scholars in CTE. Since it was established by President Johnson in 1964, the Presidential Scholars Program has honored almost 7,000 of America’s top-performing students. The program was last expanded in 1979 by President Carter to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, literary, and performing arts. Each year, the program recognizes two high school seniors from each state and 15 scholars at-large on the basis of excellence in scholarship. An additional 20 scholars are selected for exceptional talent in the arts. In 2016, the White House will welcome the inaugural class of 20 CTE Presidential Scholars, who will be selected by the Commission on Presidential Scholars based on outstanding scholarship and demonstrated ability in CTE.

Youth CareerConnect

Additionally, in November 2013, as part of the response to the President’s call for a comprehensive effort to rethink the high school experience for America’s youth and to ensure students are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and in a competitive workforce, the U.S. Department of Labor collaborated with the Department of Education to make more than \$100 million available for Youth CareerConnect grants to provide high school students with the industry-relevant education and skills they need for a successful future. The Youth CareerConnect program encouraged America’s school districts, institutions of higher education, the workforce investment system, and their partners to integrate rigorous educational standards with work experiences and skills in ways that enhance instruction and deliver real-world learning opportunities for students.

More than 200 applicants in 45 states, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico applied for grants, demonstrating an urgent need for federal support for these efforts. Across the country, 24 Youth CareerConnect awards are providing \$107 million to partnerships to re-design the teaching and learning experience for youth to more fully prepare them with the skills, and industry-relevant education needed to get on the pathway to a successful career, including postsecondary education or registered apprenticeship.

Youth CareerConnect grants are currently in their second year of implementation. In the first year, over 6,000 students enrolled, including 41 percent Latino students, 23 percent black students, and 43 percent low-income students. Some examples of the excellent work taking place in local communities across the country include:

- **The Los Angeles Unified School District** is using its \$7 million Youth CareerConnect grant to build out new career academies in six high schools that will focus on healthcare,

“ Today, there are 3.9 million jobs going unfilled because employers cannot find applicants with the education and skills needed to fill them. Education is the solution to this problem. The Youth CareerConnect program can help to ensure that all children receive the education they deserve and the experience the nation’s job market demands. ”

– FORMER GOVERNOR BOB WISE
President, Alliance for Excellent Education

biotechnology, and other technology-related industries. The program is backed by funding from the Irvine Foundation. The United Way of Greater Los Angeles, the workforce investment system, and the Chamber of Commerce will help provide work-based learning opportunities to students, including 10,000 summer internships for students.

- **The Metropolitan School District of Pike Township in Indianapolis** is using its \$7 million grant to expand career academies in advanced manufacturing and logistics, working with Conexus, an advanced manufacturing collaborative, and EmployIndy to provide work-based learning opportunities. The grantee also will expand STEM academies, including working with the National Society of Black Engineers, Women in Technology, and the Indiana Girls Collaborative to ensure these programs are resulting in a more diverse STEM workforce.
- **The Denver School District** is leveraging nearly \$7 million to create and expand STEM pathways in eight high schools. Students will participate in a paid internship or job shadow opportunities and complete a capstone project that demonstrates how they applied the skills and knowledge learned in the classroom to their workplace-based learning experience. Denver also will work with workforce investment partners to provide career fairs and summer industry academies.

Giving All Students Access to High-Quality STEM Education

Since the beginning of his administration, President Obama has sought to improve STEM education to prepare all students to compete in the innovation economy. Over the past seven-and-a-half years, the Obama administration's efforts have resulted in unprecedented levels of public-private collaboration in support of STEM education; policies and budgets focused on maximizing federal investment in active, rigorous STEM-learning experiences; and innovative and wide-ranging efforts to inspire and recognize young inventors, discoverers, and makers.

To meet the projected workforce need of 1 million additional STEM graduates by 2022 and to realize the vision of a highly diverse, creative, and sufficient STEM workforce and a STEM-literate citizenry, the Obama administration has recognized that we must engage all students. This effort must include women and minorities who are poorly represented in many STEM fields—despite the fact that these demographic groups comprise more than two-thirds of college students. Failing to engage underrepresented groups will lead to shortfalls in our nation's STEM workforce. Importantly, it also will prevent the

“ One of the things that I've been focused on as President is how we create an all-hands-on-deck approach to science, technology, engineering, and math... We need to make this a priority to train an army of new teachers in these subject areas, and to make sure that all of us as a country are lifting up these subjects for the respect that they deserve. ”

– PRESIDENT OBAMA
April 22, 2013

STEM professions from capitalizing on the power of human diversity, a historical strength and competitive edge of the American economy, and will deprive some of our citizens from engaging in the fulfilling and remunerative careers that STEM fields offer.

The change needed to broaden access, success, and diversity in STEM education may seem daunting, but a vast array of evidence-based teaching strategies and methods that inspire and support all students will pave the way. The last half-century of education research has helped to shed light on the reasons that students—and, in particular, women and ethnic minorities—tend to be underrepresented in the study of or careers in STEM fields. We must continue to change the image of STEM jobs and the people who work in them. That means providing role models to inspire diverse young people to pursue STEM careers and offering the public a more realistic and positive image of STEM fields than is evident in current media.

The President also has taken significant additional steps to accelerate progress on STEM education efforts across all levels of government and with the private sector, including:

- **Building a strong “all-hands-on-deck” effort that includes business, nonprofits, foundations, and others:** In response to the President's call to action, private organizations made commitments of over \$1 billion in investments for improving STEM education as part of the President's Educate to Innovate campaign, including a coalition called 100Kin10 aimed at training 100,000 STEM teachers within 10 years. Institutions and organizations made more than 100 individual commitments as part of the 2014 White House College Opportunity Days of Action to attract and retain tens of thousands more students on a pathway to STEM degrees to support the President's goal of 1 million more STEM college graduates.

- Deploying the President’s personal passion for getting more students excited about science and math:** The President has hosted the first-ever White House Science Fair to celebrate student winners of math, science, and robotics competitions and hosted the first-ever White House Maker Faire in 2014, which showcased students and adults applying the tools and skills necessary to design and make just about anything. In addition, President Obama has led by example as the first President to write a line of computer code as part of an “Hour of Code” in 2014 and issued a video calling on students, parents, and teachers across the country to do the same.

In addition, the administration has maintained a strong investment in STEM education even during difficult budgetary times by:

- Incorporating STEM education into the administration’s overall education reform strategy:** The President’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget prioritizes three major areas for investment to support STEM education for all students: (1) expanding access to rigorous STEM courses, including computer science, (2) improving STEM teaching and supporting active learning, and (3) addressing bias and expanding opportunities for underrepresented students in STEM.
- Expanding the impact of existing federal STEM programs:** The administration has made strong strides in federal agency collaboration to improve STEM education. In support of that shared goal, Congress passed and President Obama signed the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010, a key piece of legislation supporting the federal government’s STEM education efforts. As called for in this law, the administration formed a Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) under the National Science and Technology Council and produced a Federal STEM Education 5-Year Strategic Plan in May 2013.



Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

Computer Science for All

Since the beginning of his administration, President Obama has sought to expand access to P-12 computer science (CS), both to support the innovation economy, and to address the substantial gender and racial disparities in CS. In 2015, only 22 percent of students who took the AP Computer Science (AP CS) exam were girls, and only 13 percent were African-American or Latino students. In three states, no girls took the AP CS exam and in 10 states fewer than 10 girls took the exam. In 21 states, fewer than 10 percent of African Americans took the AP CS exam, with none taking it in nine of those states. In contrast, nearly all parents increasingly recognize the need for more CS education—with more than nine out of 10 parents surveyed last year saying they want CS taught at their child’s school.

“ *In the new economy, computer science isn’t an optional skill—it’s a basic skill, right along with the three ‘Rs.’* ”

– PRESIDENT OBAMA
January 30, 2016

There were several obstacles in addressing these challenges. The first is that CS largely has been missing from P-12 education. Only 28 states currently allow students to count computer science toward high school graduation. Compounding this problem, there were not enough educators to teach CS courses. Fewer than 15 percent of all high schools offered any AP CS courses in 2015.

The President's Proposal and Call to Action

In his 2016 State of the Union address, President Obama put forward a bold proposal that would give all students the chance to learn CS in school, including a budget proposal that would help states and districts increase their investments in CS education and action by federal agencies starting this year to jumpstart the effort:

- **Historic Budget Proposal to Empower States and Districts:** The President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget provides \$4 billion in funding for all 50 states, and \$100 million directly for districts, to increase access to P-12 CS by training teachers, expanding access to high-quality instructional materials, and building effective regional collaborations. If funded, these grants would allow more states and districts to offer hands-on CS courses across all of their public high schools; get students involved early by creating high-quality CS learning opportunities in elementary and middle schools; expand overall access to rigorous STEM coursework; and ensure all students have the chance to participate, including girls and underrepresented minorities.
- **Action by Federal Agencies Starting This Year:** Jumpstarting the effort this year, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) are investing more than \$135 million to support and train CS teachers, who are a critical ingredient to offering CS education in schools. The agencies will make these investments over five years using existing funds.
- **Private and Public Commitments to Expand Computer Science for All:** In January, Delaware, Hawaii and more than 30 school districts announced plans to expand CS opportunities; Cartoon Network, Google, and Salesforce.org announced more than \$60 million in new philanthropic investments, and Microsoft announced a 50-state campaign to expand CS; and Code.org announced plans to offer CS training to an additional 25,000 teachers this year.

Since the President issued his CS proposal, we have seen real progress, including:

- **Five States have Supported New K-12 CS Efforts:** In early March 2015, Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo announced her plans for Rhode Island to give CS education to all of its students. Since the President's announcement, Idaho Governor Butch Otter and Utah Governor Gary Herbert have both signed bills to expand access to CS in Idaho and Utah schools, Virginia passed legislation adding CS to its K-12 standards, and Indiana has adopted new standards for teaching computer science in kindergarten through eighth grade.

“ The White House...announced its plan to give more students the opportunity to learn to code in schools. This is an effort I really believe in.... When people learn to code, they get the opportunity to build the products of the future and move our society forward.... Computer science in school creates opportunities for everyone.

– MARK ZUCKERBERG
Founder and CEO, Facebook

- **Cities and School Districts have Stepped Up:** In March 2015, Chicago's City Council acted to make CS a graduation requirement, starting with the high school class of 2020. Meanwhile, individual schools, like Tech Valley High School in New York, have announced plans to make CS a required course. Riverside Unified Schools has pulled together a consortium of school districts in the Inland Empire region of Southern California, to prepare 250 new CS teachers across schools serving a population of 245,000 students. Palm Beach County Public Schools has committed to expanding K-12 CS by training up to 100 new CS teachers in the 2016-2017 school year in partnership with Code.org. Alabama's A+ College Ready has committed to expand high school CS courses throughout the state, to at least 35 high schools, in partnership with Code.org.
- **Tech Leaders Have Rallied in Support:** The #CSforAll campaign has registered more than 400 million social media impressions and inspired an outpouring of support from technology leaders including Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg.

In addition, at the 2016 White House Science Fair, the Obama administration announced new public and private actions in support of Computer Science for All, including: (1) new Department of Education guidance to states, school districts, and other education organizations on the many ways they can use existing federal funds to advance P-12 STEM and CS learning; (2) a \$200 million investment by Oracle to support CS education for an additional 125,000 students in the United States; and (3) more than 500 K-12 schools, as well as a growing community of nonprofits, companies, and others committing to expand access to CS.

ENSURING EQUITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS

“ We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else. ”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
January 21, 2013, Second Inaugural Address

The Obama administration consistently has promoted equity of opportunity for all students in every facet of its work. Ensuring our children’s success is possible under any circumstances, as long as the adults can put aside their differences and focus on children and their interests. Equity is woven through the Obama administration’s entire education agenda from critical formula programs that serve all students—including low-income, homeless, English learner and rural students, as well as students with disabilities—to bold competitive grant programs to drive local- and state-level reforms, to the initiatives that have launched from the White House and are supported largely by local communities, nonprofits, or philanthropies.

Supporting Students with Disabilities

President Obama is committed to ensuring that all children, including students with disabilities, have an equal opportunity to participate in a high-quality education; are expected to perform to high levels; and, to the maximum extent possible, are prepared to lead productive, independent lives.

The overwhelming majority of students with disabilities who are served in schools do not have the most severe cognitive disabilities that inhibit their ability to learn grade-level content. Rather, we know that when students with disabilities are held to high expectations, have access to the general curriculum alongside their same-age peers, and receive effective instruction and support, they can achieve to high academic standards. Students with disabilities make up approximately 13 percent of the school-age population, and the majority of these students spend a significant amount of their day in the general education classroom. In fact, 60 percent of students with disabilities spend 80 percent or more of their day in general education and 80 percent of students with disabilities spend 40 percent or more of their day in the general education environment.

Yet, the administration also recognizes that greater emphasis is needed in improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient in fourth grade reading was lower in 2015 than it was in 2007. The same was true for eighth grade mathematics. In 2014, only two-thirds of students with disabilities graduated from high school with a regular high school diploma.

Addressing Disparities through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

In November 1975, President Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In adopting this landmark civil rights measure, Congress opened public school doors for millions of children

with disabilities and laid the foundation of the country's commitment to ensuring that children with disabilities have opportunities to develop their talents, share their gifts, and contribute to their communities.

Since passage of the law, classrooms have become more inclusive and the future of children with disabilities has become brighter. But challenges remain, particularly with respect to ensuring fairness in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities. To address these inequities, IDEA requires states to identify districts with "significant disproportionality" in special education—that is, when districts identify, place outside the regular classroom, or discipline children from any racial or ethnic group at markedly higher rates than their peers.

But, according to an analysis by the Department of Education of data that states submitted under IDEA, hundreds of districts around the country with large racial and ethnic disparities go unidentified. For example, 876 school districts gave African-American students with disabilities short-term, out-of-school suspensions at least twice as often as all other students with disabilities for three years in a row. But, in 2013, states identified fewer than 500 districts in total with "significant disproportionality."

The analysis also shows that, from year to year, only 2 to 3 percent of districts nationwide are identified with significant disproportionality, and are required to take action. Many children of color—particularly black and American Indian youth—are identified at substantially higher rates than their peers. Disparities also are prevalent in the discipline of students of color with disabilities. With the exception of Latino and Asian-American students, more than one out of four boys of color with disabilities (served by IDEA)—and nearly one in five girls of color with disabilities—receives an out-of-school suspension. It is critical to ensure that overrepresentation is not the result of misidentification, which can interfere with a school's ability to provide children with the appropriate educational services required by law.

To address these equity considerations, the Department of Education put forward a new proposed rule in February 2016 that would, for the first time, require states to implement a standard approach to compare racial and ethnic groups, with reasonable thresholds for determining when disparities have become significant. That determination is critical to ensuring students get the supports they need and deserve. Once identified as having a significant disproportionality, the district must set aside 15 percent of its IDEA formula funds for elementary and secondary education to provide comprehensive, coordinated, early intervening services.

Further, the policies, practices, and procedures of the district must be reviewed, and, if necessary, revised to ensure compliance with IDEA. This proposed rule will be finalized after the notice and public comment period.

Advancing Equity through My Brother's Keeper

Promoting educational equity for all students and youth has been at the heart of President Obama's agenda for education and opportunity. In February 2014, the President established the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Task Force, a coordinated federal effort to improve the expected educational and life outcomes for all young people, including young boys and men of color, and to address the persistent opportunity gaps they face.

“That's what 'My Brother's Keeper' is all about. Helping more of our young people stay on track. Providing the support they need to think more broadly about their future. Building on what works—when it works, in those critical life-changing moments.”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
February 27, 2014

The work of the MBK Task Force is structured around critical points of intervention that can have the greatest impact across the life continuum from birth to adulthood. Research has shown that there are key milestones in a young person's life that are especially predictive of later success; and, over the last two years, the MBK Task Force has enhanced its focus on each of these milestones. They include:

- Entering school ready to learn;
- Reading at grade level by third grade;
- Graduating from high school ready for college and career;
- Completing postsecondary education or training;
- Successfully entering the workforce; and
- Reducing violence and providing a second chance.

Through a range of federal policies, the MBK Task Force and federal agencies are working to address the challenges our students face. Those efforts include, for example:

- **Supporting Families in Bridging the Word Gap:** Research also shows that exposing infants, toddlers, and young

children to language-rich experiences consistently benefits their brain development and school readiness. To address this issue, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the “Bridging the Word Gap Challenge” to spur innovative solutions to promote a rich early language environment for all children, including children from low-income families. The goal of the challenge is to create a technology-based tool to help parents and caregivers talk and engage more with young children, so that all children are on the path to success from an early age. More than 75 submissions from early childhood development and technology experts in academia and private industry were reviewed by an independent panel. From the submissions, 10 selected teams currently are developing prototypes of their innovative proposals to test their methodologies. Among the winners was an app titled “Habla Bebe,” developed by researchers at Emory, Columbia, and Florida International Universities, and that promotes Spanish-English bilingualism and reduces the word gap for Hispanic children. Another winner was “Wordometer,” a wearable device that tracks the number of words that children hear and gives caregivers feedback via their smartphone. In the next several months, each of these 10 teams will create prototypes of their ideas and test their effectiveness. The Challenge eventually will award a total \$300,000 in prizes to support innovation and problem solving around the word gap issue.

- **Encourage Schools to Rethink Discipline Practice and Policy:** The MBK Task Force has built upon previous federal efforts to encourage alternatives to suspension and expulsion, and address discipline disparities. This collaboration has resulted in the creation of recommendations by the Council of State Governments for dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline. The Department of Education also released a School Discipline Guidance Package, including guiding principles for improving discipline practice and creating supportive school climate and legal guidance clarifying schools’ obligations under civil rights laws to not discriminate on the basis of race in the administration of school discipline. In 2015, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services issued a joint policy statement calling for the elimination of suspension and expulsion in preschool settings, as well as a commitment to clarify the implications of federal statutes for the discipline of students with disabilities. The MBK Task Force also has continued federal efforts to convene state and local officials, and, in 2015, gathered 40 school districts from across the nation to the White House to announce new commitments to act. Since then, the Task Force has organized the first of a series of regional

convenings, starting with over 13 district teams from across the southeastern region, to provide in-depth technical assistance and supports to school districts.

- **Issue a Call to Action to Address Chronic Absenteeism:** In 2015, the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice partnered with Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ad Council, and Johns Hopkins University to announce “Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism” starting with 10 cities, and expanding to 20 more by the end of spring. The Mott Foundation has pledged up to \$1 million for a public awareness campaign targeting parents of students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The Department of Education will work with Johns Hopkins to launch MBK School Success Mentors, an effort to match 250,000 students in the sixth and ninth grades with mentors over the next two years, and over 1 million students with mentors over the next three to five years.
- **Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Special Education:** As discussed above, in 2016, the Department of Education proposed new regulations to address how states identify districts with large racial and ethnic disparities in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities. This action follows a 2013 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which noted that only 2 percent of districts nationwide were identified with significant disproportionality each year.

As a result of these actions, national discourse around school discipline and chronic absenteeism is growing. Providence, R.I., and Austin, Texas are a part of the first cohort of communities to participate in the MBK School Success Mentor Program launched by the Department of Education in February 2016. Providence has set a target of matching a total of 80 mentors to 300 students by the end of the 2015-2016 school year, while Austin already has paired 72 mentors with 72 students across three pilot schools. In 2015, Illinois eliminated “zero tolerance” discipline policies, and encouraged the use of suspension as a last resort, following in the footsteps of other states, such as California, Maryland, and Colorado, which have worked to address discipline through state policy reform. Additionally, Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the Houston Independent School District (HISD) announced efforts to overhaul their codes of student conduct, joining districts like Oakland, Syracuse, and Broward County. Miami-Dade announced it would eliminate out-of-school suspensions, starting in 2015-2016, after suspending 36,000 students in the 2013-2014 school year alone. The HISD School Board, meanwhile, has passed a new policy banning suspensions of young children.

The administration's proposal to address racial and ethnic disparities in special education also has received endorsements from various disability rights groups, including the National Disability Rights Network and the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates.

The President launched MBK to urge a greater focus on what works to help improve life outcomes for all our children, and he has called on communities and the private sector to do their part to expand opportunity for young people across the country. MBK and related efforts on chronic absenteeism and school discipline ultimately are about sustaining positive change for our children, and while the road ahead is long, we know it ends in bright futures for every learner.

Expanding Equity through Stronger Schools

America's schools are becoming increasingly segregated by socioeconomic status. One-quarter of our nation's public school students attend schools in which more than 75 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch; in our cities, nearly half of all students attend these high-poverty schools. The link between poverty and negative educational outcomes has long been demonstrated through both research and experience, and was a key factor behind the original ESEA of 1965, which provided funds to states and districts to help schools compensate for the disadvantages of poverty faced by millions of American schoolchildren and their families.

States with more socioeconomic segregation in schools tend to have larger achievement gaps between low- and higher-income students; and socioeconomically diverse schools can lead to improved outcomes for disadvantaged students. The President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget continues to support expanded educational opportunity for all students in key areas, including a \$120 million proposal for a new Stronger Together program, which would support voluntary community efforts to develop and implement comprehensive strategies that address the effects of concentrated poverty through increased school socioeconomic diversity.

Improving Education in Indian Country

In recent years, American Indian and Alaska Native students have demonstrated growth in high school graduation rates and, between 2010 and 2014, these youth represented the fastest improving student groups for which data exists. This progress builds upon an era of self-determination, through the support of tribally driven and designed education, that has seen high school, college attendance, and college completion

“ [M]y administration is determined to partner with tribes, and it's not something that just happens once in a while. It takes place every day, on just about every issue ... And that's what real nation-to-nation partnerships look like. ”

– PRESIDENT OBAMA
June 13, 2014

rates double for this population over the last 40 years. While this progress is important, we have much further to go to ensure students in Indian Country have every opportunity to reach their full potential through a rigorous education that includes culturally appropriate supports. For example, we know that fewer than half of American Indian and Alaska Native high school students have access to the full range of math and science courses in their high schools. We also know that American Indian and Alaska Native students are disproportionately suspended and expelled, representing less than 1 percent of the student population in the U.S., but 2 percent of all out-of-school suspensions and 3 percent of expulsions.

The President's Commitment to Students in Indian Country

Through new and increased investments and initiatives, the Obama administration has strengthened support for Indian tribes and organizations, local and state educational agencies, postsecondary institutions, and other entities to meet the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native youth so these students have access to a high-quality education, achieve challenging state academic standards, and are prepared for college and careers. President Obama demonstrated his commitment to Indian Country early in 2009, through the Recovery Act, which invested \$170.5 million in Indian Education at the Department of Education and \$277 million in tribal school construction at the Department of the Interior.

The administration's efforts to support education in Indian Country also have been responsive to tribal leaders' desire to have a more meaningful and engaging role in the education of their students, and this will continue to be a foundation of the work moving forward.

In 2014, President Obama made a historic visit to Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Nation in Cannonball, North Dakota—it marked his first visit to Indian Country and represented one of the few

trips to an Indian reservation by a sitting President. During that visit, the President, along with the Secretary of the Interior, released the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) 2014 Blueprint for Reform, which shifts the primary mission of the BIE from a direct operator of schools into a technical assistance and capacity provider serving tribally controlled schools, much like a state department of education, while still operating a more limited number of schools that tribes have not chosen to control.

Steps to Support Students in Indian Country

By working with Congress, tribal leaders, and federal agencies, the Department of Education and the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education (WHIAIANE) have addressed issues important to tribal communities and Native American youth in a number of ways. For example, several agencies, including the Department of Education, engaged in the development and implementation of key Memorandum of Agreements in 2012 focused on Native language preservation and revitalization and strengthening interagency coordination and collaboration with BIE.

The Department of Education also has supported several programs and grant opportunities targeted to tribes and tribal communities, including the State-Tribal Education Partnership Program (STEP) and the Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program. The President requested funding for STEP through his Fiscal Year 2012 budget request to Congress to establish a pilot program of competitive grants to tribal educational agencies (TEAs) to increase their role in the education of students in tribal communities. With a modest \$1.9 million grant, the Department of Education allocated grants to promote increased collaboration among tribal educational agencies, state educational agencies, and school districts that serve American Indian and Alaska Native students. Owing to the success of the program, Congress provided additional funding for STEM in 2015 and the program was codified into law through ESSA.

The Department of Education and WHIAIANE have worked to establish a dialogue with Native communities as well. For instance, in 2014, WHIAIANE held nine Native Student Environment Listening Sessions in seven states from New York to California to Alaska; drawing more than 1,000 participants, discussing issues ranging from bullying, student discipline, potentially harmful Native imagery and symbolism, to the impact of these school climate issues. In October 2015, the Department of Education released the Student Environment Listening Sessions Final Report, which identifies common issues and concerns shared by teachers, parents, community members, and students, and provides participants'

recommendations for how federal, tribal, state, and local governments may address them.

Additionally, as part of the President's Generation Indigenous Initiative, established in 2014, the Department launched the Native Youth Community Partnership (NYCP) grants. NYCP supports tribally designed place-based solutions that can improve college- and career-readiness for Native youth. Funding under this important authority more than quadrupled in Fiscal Year 2016; and the President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal increases funding for this program to \$53 million, \$30 million over the 2016 enacted level. The administration's support of investment in these programs amounts to the largest increase in this title since its inception.

CASE STUDY OF SUPPORT: Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

The White House Domestic Policy Council, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior's Office of the Secretary, the White House Initiative for American Indian and Alaska Native Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and several other federal agencies have brought together approximately 120 educators with local, state, and federal leaders in Pine Ridge, S.D. These meetings provide a unique forum for further discussions about how schools can work together to support Pine Ridge students by developing school-based capacity for (a) crisis intervention and suicide prevention; (b) successful language and culture instruction; (c) unified school leadership; and, (d) food and nutrition services across the reservation. The Department of Education also has assisted the community through the Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant program to aid in recovery from student suicides and suicide attempts.

Strengthening education for every student lies at the heart of our nation's fundamental promise, which is that with hard work and determination, all of our people—including our traditionally underserved and most vulnerable—can achieve their fullest potential and make of their lives what they will. We owe no less to our Native children, and with collective will and dedication, we will see the day when all Native American and Alaska Native children can access the world-class education they deserve.

Preventing Bullying and Protecting All Students

Bullying is a serious issue for students and their families, and efforts to reduce bullying concern us all—from policymakers, to administrators, to educators, to communities, to students themselves. Bullying can occur anywhere and can happen to any student. Research shows that students who are bullied are more likely to struggle in school and skip class. They are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, be depressed, and are at higher risk of suicide. Students who bully are similarly at higher risk of these same behaviors, as well as being more likely to be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses, or children as adults. Bystanders also tend toward similar behaviors as students who are bullied.

“ We’ve got to dispel the myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage—that it’s some inevitable part of growing up. It’s not. We have an obligation to ensure that our schools are safe for all of our kids. ”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
October 21, 2010

Early on in his administration, President Obama indicated his commitment to bullying prevention by calling for a coordinated federal strategy to prevent and reduce the prevalence of bullying in our nation’s schools and communities. With this call to action, there have been concerted efforts at all levels—federal, state, and local—to prevent and respond to bullying.

Taking Action to Prevent Bullying

The Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention (FPBP), a voluntary, collaborative effort among numerous federal agencies and offices was established to provide effective and consistent federal guidance on bullying prevention. The FPBP is led by the Department of Education and aims to significantly reduce the prevalence of bullying in school-aged youth, typically defined as those students who are 5 to 18 years old. Its work includes:

- **Holding Bi-Annual Federal Bullying Prevention Summits:** In 2010, the Department of Education, in collaboration with the FPBP Summit Planning Committee, organized the first-ever Federal Bullying Prevention Summit. The purpose of these biannual Summits has been to highlight new and emerging research and resources from the bullying field, but also to discuss the activities in which the FPBP is engaged. The audience for the Summits included state and local educational agencies, educators, students, advocacy groups, community organizations, and legislators.
- **Establishing StopBullying.gov:** This website serves as the one-stop shop for federal bullying information and is the



President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama meet with a group of students and parents from the Conference on Bullying Prevention in the Oval Office, March 10, 2011. Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

main online content source for the FPBP. It has become part of a broader digital communications campaign, which includes a robust social media component with an ever-growing presence on platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and more.

- **Creating a Definition of Bullying:** In January 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Education released a uniform definition of bullying. The definition was developed in partnership with bullying experts in response to feedback at the 2011 Federal Bullying Prevention Summit that the lack of a uniform definition of bullying both in research and in policy restricted the applicability and comparability of research and affected the ability to monitor trends in bullying over time.
- **Communicating Clear Information about Bullying:** The Department of Education has issued guidance documents to help states, districts and stakeholders understand how to stop bullying.

While much work remains, we are seeing progress in reducing bullying across the country. Recent reports from NCES, for example, show that in 2013, the prevalence of bullying among students ages 12 to 18 has dropped significantly to 22 percent after remaining stubbornly around 28 percent since 2005. Additionally, the prevalence of cyberbullying has fallen among this same population to 7 percent from 9 percent in 2011.

We know that as schools become safer places for all students to learn and achieve their full potential, our children become better able to thrive both academically and socially. The Department of Education, along with other federal partners and other stakeholders, are deeply involved in the fight against bullying in our nation's schools.

Advancing Civil Rights for All Students

President Obama believes that from preschool enrollment to college attendance and completion, all students—regardless of race, gender, disability, or age—need a high-quality education to be successful. Toward this end, the Obama administration has safeguarded the rights and protections of our students by enforcing our civil rights laws and implementing regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in all programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance—all in an effort to ensure every student has equal access to educational opportunity.

Our nation's civil rights laws extend to a wide range of federal funding recipients, including all state educational agencies;

“When too many of our schools are failing our children, too many of our kids are dropping out of school, that's not a black or white or brown problem—that is an American problem. We're going to have to solve that problem.”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
April 6, 2011

approximately 16,900 local educational agencies; about 7,200 postsecondary institutions, including proprietary schools and community colleges; 80 state vocational rehabilitation agencies and their sub-recipients; and other institutions that receive Department of Education financial assistance, such as libraries, museums, and correctional institutions.

Nearly 80 million individuals are beneficiaries of the financial assistance these institutions and agencies receive on behalf of the Department of Education. Throughout the President's time in office, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has helped ensure all these individuals have equal access to educational opportunity by releasing policy guidance, conducting investigations and monitoring schools, providing technical assistance, and administering and improving the Civil Rights Data Collection.

OCR's policy guidance documents can have a widespread, positive impact on students' civil rights by guiding recipients to proactively address critical civil rights issues, without any federal enforcement action. At the time of this publication, OCR has released 32 policy guidance documents throughout this administration. These policy documents include a number of Dear Colleague Letters to state and local leaders, educators, and schools, to clarify the rights and protections of our students, including:

- **Preventing and responding to sexual harassment and sexual violence:** Comprehensive guidance on the obligations of schools and colleges under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and violence has led to ongoing change in the higher education community. Within months of the release, dozens of universities revised their sexual assault policies. Additionally, OCR has released guidance documents addressing the prevention of sexual violence, as well as a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document clarifying the legal requirements under Title IX.
- **Ensuring equitable access to athletics for students with disabilities:** Guidance that explains obligations to ensure

students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, and discusses the provision of separate or different athletic opportunities for these students.

- **Advancing the nondiscriminatory discipline practices and policies:** Released jointly with the Department of Justice, guidance to address the requirement for nondiscriminatory administration of school discipline and provides information to describe how schools can meet their obligations under federal law to administer school discipline without discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- **Ensuring equitable resources:** Guidance explains that schools, as a matter of federal law, must ensure students have equal access to educational resources without regard to race, color, or national origin. All students deserve a high-quality education that includes resources such as academic and extracurricular programs, strong teaching, technology and instructional materials, and safe school facilities.
- **Promoting effective communication for students with disabilities related to speech, vision, or hearing:** Joint guidance with the Department of Justice to address the responsibility of public schools to ensure that communication with students with hearing, vision, or speech disabilities is as effective as communication with all other students.
- **Clarifying the applicability of civil rights laws in juvenile justice residential facilities:** Released jointly with the Department of Justice, guidance to clarify the applicability of federal civil rights laws in juvenile justice residential facilities.
- **Safeguarding the rights of English-learners:** In collaboration with the Department of Justice, guidance and two fact sheets to address schools' obligations to English-learner students as well as limited English proficient parents. The letter outlines common civil rights concerns that schools need to address to remain in compliance with the law. The guidance is the first in 24 years to address the rights of English-learner students, and comes 40 years after the Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols* that schools must provide targeted help for these students.

Enforcement of Civil Rights

Over the last seven years, the Department of Education has handled close to 60,000 civil rights complaints and has entered into over 4,500 detailed resolution agreements with P-12 and postsecondary institutions nationwide. The number of complaints received generally rose in several areas,

including restraint or seclusion of students with disabilities; accessibility of curriculum through technology for students with disabilities; harassment based on race, color, or national origin; appropriate support for English-learner students; and sexual violence. The Department of Education has continued its practice of making publicly available resolution letters and agreements for cases resolved in the last two fiscal years. In addition, since May 2014, the Department of Education proactively has released to the public and the press a list of educational institutions currently under investigation for whether their policies and practices related to sexual violence meet Title IX requirements. By releasing this information on a weekly basis, in response to a record high volume of requests for the information, the Department of Education furthered the national dialogue on an important civil rights issue and will help others comply without the need for enforcement.

Impact of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)—Shedding Light on America's Opportunity Gaps

During this administration, OCR released its transformed Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), which now offers the public an array of new civil rights indicators with which to gauge the "equity health" of schools. By making the data public on OCR's website, <http://ocrdata.ed.gov>, the CRDC has been heralded as a first-of-its-kind data tool to analyze opportunity gaps, allowing citizens and schools nationwide to identify educational equity-related problems and solutions.

Across the spectrum, the CRDC tells an important story about a number of issues facing America's schools. For example, on access to rigorous courses and learning environments, and indicators about teachers, the data describe common trends:

- **Public preschool access is not yet a reality for much of the nation:** About 40 percent of districts do not offer preschool programs.
- **Kindergarten retention disparities:** Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaska Native kindergarten students are held back a year at nearly twice the rate of white kindergarten students. Boys represent 61 percent of retained kindergarteners.
- **Suspension of preschool children:** Black children make up 18 percent of preschool enrollment but 42 percent of preschool children receiving an out-of-school suspension. Boys receive more than three-quarters of all out-of-school preschool suspensions.
- **High-level math and science courses are widely unavailable:** Nationwide, only 50 percent of high schools offer calculus courses, and only 63 percent offer physics courses.

- **Access to experienced teachers:** Black, Latino, and American Indian and Alaska Native students attend schools with higher concentrations of first-year teachers at a higher rate (3 percent to 4 percent) than white students (1 percent). English learners also attend these schools at slightly higher rates (3 percent) than non-English learners (2 percent).
- **Teacher salary disparities:** Nearly one in four districts with two or more high schools report a teacher salary gap of more than \$5,000 between high schools with the highest and lowest black and Latino student enrollments.

These data already have been applied to improve education policy at the state and federal levels. In July 2015, at a White House event entitled “Rethink School Discipline,” OCR released the state- and national-level discipline estimations from the 2011-2012 CRDC, as well as interactive maps of discipline data. The discipline data included information on students who received suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement, school-related arrests, and corporal punishment. The White House event sparked national conversation on how to reduce exclusionary school discipline. At least two state boards of education, in Maryland and Michigan, and state legislatures in California and elsewhere have introduced policy supported by analyses of local CRDC data; and counties and districts in those states and others such as Colorado, Texas, Virginia, North Carolina, and Delaware recently have taken up reform of zero-tolerance discipline policies, many citing CRDC data as part of their movements.

Despite these sobering numbers, the CRDC data on opportunities for America’s students show that access and opportunity gaps can be closed. Analyses using new tools on the CRDC allow educators, researchers, policymakers, parents, and students to find districts and schools where, for example, students have equal opportunity to participate in gifted and talented programs, to take algebra early, and to get access to the full range of college- and career-preparatory courses in high school that they will need to succeed in life after graduation. With these tools, the public can find and learn from schools and districts debunking myths about achievement and opportunity.

Protecting the Rights of LGBT Students

In 2010, the Department of Education issued guidance to clarify the obligations of states and districts to investigate and remedy instances of sexual harassment and harassment on the basis of racial and national origin, gender, and disability status because the legal implications of these issues were previously not clear to the field. The guidance explained that the civil rights laws enforced by OCR require that if an institution knows or has reason to know about student-on-student harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability, it must take immediate and effective action to eliminate the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and, where appropriate, address its effects on the harassed student and the school community.

The guidance also made clear that schools may be in violation of Title IX by failing to effectively respond to bullying or harassment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) students. Harassment of LGBT students constitutes sex-based discrimination if it is based on the student’s failure to conform to sex stereotypes. In addition, the guidance stated that Title IX prohibits sexual harassment of all students, regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The guidance reminds schools and universities that when harassment targets LGBT students, includes anti-gay comments, or is partly based on a target’s actual or perceived sexual orientation, Title IX obligates the institution to investigate and remedy any overlapping sexual or gender-based harassment of those students.

Continuing Our Work

Discrimination and harassment are harmful to students and the learning environment and are far too pervasive in our nation’s schools. For the 2015-2016 school year, schools will be required to report to the Department of Education, for the first time, data about the number of allegations received by a school of bullying or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or religion. In the months ahead, the Obama administration will continue to work toward more justice for every student in every school in America.

SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING EDUCATORS



I still remember the special teachers that touched my life. And we all do. We remember the way they challenged us, the way they made us feel, how they pushed us, the encouragement that they gave us, the values that they taught us, the way they helped us to understand the world and analyze it and ask questions. They helped us become the people that we are today.



– PRESIDENT OBAMA
May 3, 2011

President Obama often tells young people that if they want to join a profession where they can make a difference every single day, they should become a teacher. Since the beginning of his administration, the President has proposed changes needed to strengthen the teaching profession at every stage, to better prepare, develop, support, and reward great teachers that will help America's children excel.

That includes listening and working in partnership with teachers across America to forge a vision for transforming the profession, built on shared responsibility and accountability for results, on-going collaboration and development, and greater individual and collective autonomy for teachers that will free them from teaching to the test and unleash learning in their classrooms. Since the President entered office, he has advanced policies and directed significant investment to ensure our educators receive the support they deserve.

The President has supported teachers and educators, recognizing students and educators alike thrive when they are engaged in productive, focused relationships with each other and that these relationships can help facilitate student learning. The Obama administration recognizes supporting our educators is particularly critical now, as we hold the highest expectations for all students to enable them to succeed and participate more fully in our society.

As a result, the administration has dedicated resources to support educators' professional growth, from preparation, to support and rewards, to retention. By encouraging new partnerships across the public and private sectors, scaling practices that help educators serve our neediest students, and implementing new mechanisms to ensure that educators' voices and experiences inform the development of federal, state and local policies, the administration has made great strides toward ensuring that every child has access to an excellent educator.

Keeping Educators in Schools at the Height of the Recession

When President Obama took office the U.S. economy was in free-fall. State and local government budgets were in trouble and facing significant cuts. This was a critical problem for America's education system, since approximately 90 percent of school funding is provided by state and local budgets, and the economic crisis forced many states to make deep cuts in funding schools.

The Recovery Act, which President Obama signed in 2009, helped by providing \$65 billion in funds for the Title I program for low-income students,

the IDEA program for students with disabilities, and temporary state stabilization funding. The law saved or created 400,000 jobs, most of them directly in education—keeping teachers, principals, librarians, and counselors on the job. It helped states maintain education funding—for example, the Recovery Act restored 9 percent of K-12 education funding in California, Indiana, Alabama and Oregon; 12 percent of funding in Florida, Wisconsin, and South Carolina; and 23 percent of funding in Illinois in 2009. In 2010, President Obama signed the Education Jobs Fund program into law to provide \$10 billion in assistance to states to save or create education jobs for the 2010-2011 school year. Almost every single state applied for the funding, saving or creating thousands of additional education jobs.

Recruiting the Best Educators

Over the next decade, almost half of our public school teachers will retire or leave teaching, while, at the same time, fewer young people are choosing to enter the profession. These trends create both a huge need for a national teacher recruitment effort and an opportunity to build a future teacher workforce that is robust, diverse, and equipped to prepare our children to thrive in a rapidly changing economy and society. At the same time, we need to raise the status of the teaching profession to match the status it has in countries with top-performing school systems.

To address the need and opportunity, the Department of Education created TEACH: the nation's campaign to inspire the next generation of diverse, talented teachers and to raise the status of teaching. TEACH is a unique public-private partnership among the Department of Education, Microsoft, and national teaching organizations. Through TV, radio, billboards, digital and social media deployed to every media market in all 50 states, TEACH elevates perceptions of teaching and communicates the benefits the profession has to offer, connecting students with information about the profession as well as pathways to become a teacher.

Since its launch in November 2013, TEACH successfully has reached millions of college students with research-backed messaging. In a national tracking poll, 46 percent of college students indicated awareness of the campaign and the percentage indicating that teaching is “a profession for me” increased by four points (from 28 percent to 32 percent). The multi-media campaign has generated more than 6.7 million hits to teach.org, an online resource for exploring the teaching profession and learning how to become a teacher. The website connects potential educators with:

- Information about what it's like to teach;

- Opportunities to get free, one-on-one counseling and mentoring from current teachers;
- Summer internships;
- Scholarships and information about funding their teacher preparation and training;
- Access to an interactive tool illustrating the different requirements and pathways to becoming a teacher; and
- Information about certification for various teaching jobs.

The next phase of TEACH, set to launch in fall 2016, will have an increased focus on reaching people of color and individuals with STEM backgrounds. It will partner with state departments of education and school districts to create locally customized TEACH campaigns. TEACH also will partner with College Football Playoffs to leverage the significant reach and brand of college football to promote the teaching profession to today's college students, enlisting the college bowls, conference, 128 campuses, as well as players and coaches to promote the teaching profession.

Creating RESPECT for Educators

The Obama administration's Recognizing Education Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching (RESPECT) Project was developed following extensive outreach with educators and listening sessions in schools and communities across the country that identified the highest-priority needs for transforming the teaching profession. RESPECT proposed reforms across the spectrum of educators' careers, including a focus on improving preparation and early career assistance; ensuring that educators have opportunities to develop, advance, and lead as they transition to instruction aligned to more rigorous standards; and improving the work environment through investments in coaching and feedback, collaborative time, and teacher leadership.

The original RESPECT initiative primarily was based on a commitment to meet the needs of teachers and school leaders at important stages of their careers, empowering them to rise in their profession and take on new responsibilities and leadership roles. This evolved into the RESPECT: Best Job in the World proposal in President Obama's Fiscal Year 2017 budget and it reflects additional feedback from educators across the country as well as lessons from other Department of Education activities, including Teach to Lead, state educator equity plans, and competitive grant programs like the Teacher Incentive Fund.

The Obama administration believes that educating our most vulnerable students is our most critical work as a nation. To ensure that every student has access to excellent educators, we

must make teaching in a high-needs school the best job in the world. Moving to a high-needs school should be an invitation to a great place to work and a step up the career ladder—a reward for excellence and a path to continued career success.

Labor Management Collaboration

Since 2011, seven national organizations, along with the Department of Education, have been working together to support labor-management collaboration in states and school districts throughout the country to advance student learning.

Based on the belief that supporting good governance of public education in our nation's school districts is a mutual responsibility, these organizations jointly have planned three national conferences: (1) a conference of state and local labor-management teams in March of 2011 in Denver to share examples of labor-management collaboration and to explore strategies to advance student achievement; (2) a conference of state and local labor-management teams in May of 2012 in Cincinnati to explore how labor-management collaboration can transform the teaching profession; and (3) a conference of state and local labor-management teams in February 2014 in St. Louis to explore how labor-management collaboration can support the implementation of college- and career-ready standards.

For the last two years, the national co-sponsors have continued to meet and develop supports for states and districts to implement college- and career-ready standards. Together, they have developed "On the Same Page 2.0 Field Guide for Implementing College-and-Career Ready Standards through Labor-Management Collaboration." The co-sponsors also have developed a system of coaching support for districts piloting the use of the Field Guide and a companion research study on the effectiveness of this work.

In addition to these collaborative efforts, four of the co-sponsors organized, in partnership with OECD and Education International, the first International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) in New York City in March 2011. This summit was attended by 16 countries with their Ministers of Education and national union presidents. They organized a second summit in March 2013 in New York City. Since then, there have been three International Summits on the Teaching Profession in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Wellington, New Zealand; and British Columbia, Canada. ISTP has become an ongoing international community of practice dedicated to enhancing the teaching profession and improving education for all students. Each summit is unique and provides participating countries with enormous benefits, including the opportunity to learn from one another and to foster a global view that

all teachers and principals need and deserve excellent preparation, support, and opportunities for growth. The annual ISTP gatherings have helped to shape education policy in the U.S., while they also have provided a forum for our nation to showcase important, cutting-edge work to elevate the teaching profession and give teachers the opportunity to lead and shape their work.

Teacher and Principal Ambassador Programs

Initiated in 2008, the Teaching Ambassador Fellowship (TAF) program was designed with the mission of improving education for students by involving teachers in the development and implementation of national education policy. Through this fellowship, the Department of Education sought to leverage effective teaching as a critical link to improving educational outcomes in America. In 2013, the Department of Education launched the Principal Ambassador Fellowship (PAF) as a companion to the TAF program in recognition of the critical impact that school leaders have on instructional leadership, the school environment, and talent management, as well as the need to better connect this expertise and knowledge with education policymakers.

In both programs, the Department of Education hires a cadre of outstanding teachers and principals on a short-term basis in both full- and part-time positions. Each year, the teachers and principals work with one another, across teams, and with Department of Education staff to share information with outside stakeholders about federal education programs, policies, and resources with educators and other stakeholders in the field.

Since launching in 2008, the Department of Education has selected more than 100 teachers and principals for these prestigious positions through a rigorous and highly competitive process. At the Department, Fellowship teams consistently conduct outreach with thousands of educators yearly through hundreds of events and discussions. Their collective work has built an online community of nearly 90,000 people who subscribe to the Department of Education's teacher-curated e-newsletter, "Teachers Edition." For the past five years, Fellows have led annual teacher and principal shadowing events, bringing over 50 senior leaders to spend a day in the shoes of the people their efforts impact. Because of the inspiration and insight these visits provide, Fellows now facilitate monthly visits and debriefing sessions focused on key priority areas. Fellows were integral to ensuring the Department of Education's RESPECT initiative worked toward a wholly reimagined teaching profession, built from the voices of

diverse teachers. They have influenced specific policy decisions regarding accountability and the need to address over-testing; and have powered the Teach to Lead initiative.

Since 2008, Fellows have gone on to lead schools; continue teaching in classrooms; or advance teacher leadership and quality instruction for all students in their state and district agencies, within teacher preparation institutions, or nonprofit organizations. Approximately half of the Department's former Fellows continue to lead from the classroom.

Promoting Leadership from the Classroom: Teach to Lead

The job of the American teacher continues to be critical to the success of students and to the prosperity of our communities and our country. Teachers are helping to catalyze great progress in education, including our nation's record high school graduation rate, narrowed achievement gaps, and a larger number of students—particularly African-American and Hispanic students—attending college. Across the country, this progress is possible because teachers are leading from their classrooms and taking on new roles to improve education for all students. The teaching profession becomes stronger when teachers are empowered to lead; and when teaching is stronger, students benefit. This simple, yet powerful, idea is the basis for the Teach to Lead initiative.

Launched in March 2014, Teach to Lead is an initiative jointly convened by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, ASCD, and the Department of Education to advance student outcomes by expanding opportunities for teacher leadership, particularly those that allow teachers to stay in the classroom. The initiative seeks to spur fundamental changes in the culture of schools and the teaching profession so that teachers can play a more central role in the development of policies that affect their work. Thus far, the initiative has garnered support from more than 100 supporter organizations.

The mission of Teach to Lead is to advance student outcomes by expanding opportunities for teacher leadership by providing resources, facilitating stakeholder consultation, and encouraging professional collaborations to develop and amplify the work of teacher leaders. Teach to Lead envisions a world in which teachers are valued as the foremost experts in instruction, and, as such, are leaders of informing, developing, and implementing education policy and practice to steer systematic improvements to benefit student learning. Through a series of regional Teacher Leadership Summits and local Teacher Leadership Labs, the initiative has:

- Highlighted existing state and district systems that are working to support teacher leadership;
- Shared resources to create new opportunities for teacher leadership; and
- Encouraged people at all levels to commit to expanding teacher leadership.

Teacher Leadership Summits and Labs

At the regional Teacher Leadership Summits, teams of teachers worked with more than 100 supporting organizations to transform ideas into an action plan that will be implemented after the Summit. Following each Summit, several teams were invited to participate in Teacher Leadership Labs, where teams engaged in open and candid dialogue about teacher leadership to further their projects. These labs offered a forum for educators to focus on one idea to establish or expand teacher voice and leadership.

The Summits and Labs have been held in select communities identified as having strong potential for teacher leadership to take root or grow for greater impact. Both events lead to meaningful teacher leadership commitments by schools and districts and offer an opportunity for educators to work together to create detailed action plans. Since its inception, Teach to Lead and its supporter organizations have held seven Teacher Leadership Summits, one state summit, one supporting organization summit and 14 Teacher Leadership Labs. Through these Summits, Labs, and online activities, Teach to Lead has interacted with more than 3,000 teacher leaders who are now leading change.

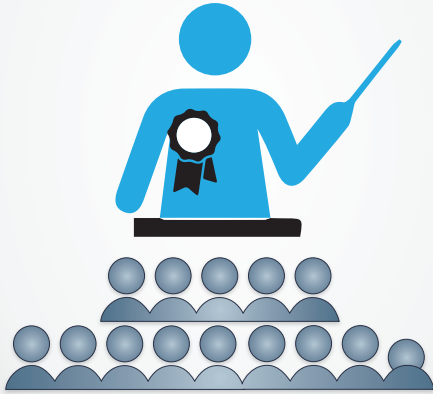
Investments in States and Districts to Train and Support Educators

A wide array of entities are responsible for elements of recruiting, preparing, developing, and supporting educators—from the federal government to state government, from schools themselves to the institutions of higher education that train most educators, to a host of external partners that work closely with schools and educators. The Obama administration has invested over \$3 billion to align these often disparate efforts to ensure that, collectively, they prepare and support effective teachers and principals to excel in all classrooms, including in those classrooms where they are most needed.

Strengthening Educator Preparation

Through competitive grant programs such as Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED), School Leadership Program (SLP), Teacher Quality Partnerships (TQP) and Transition to Teaching (TTT), the Department of Education

Since 2008-2009, more students have access to teachers with more than 3 years of experience



Source: NCES Digest (2011), Table 73; NCES Digest (2014), Table 209.20.

has encouraged institutions of higher education, local school districts, and nonprofits to focus their efforts on recruiting and supporting effective educators in the schools with our most underserved students. Across these programs, school districts and their partners are identifying their most critical talent needs, designing innovative approaches to recruiting and training candidates, and ensuring the school context and associated supports for these newfound educators helps them serve our nation's most underserved classrooms.

Since 2009, TQP has awarded 64 grants that have prepared more than 12,000 new educators through pre-baccalaureate and residency programs. By requiring partnerships between local school districts and teacher preparation programs, and ensuring that those partnerships are designed to meet the real-time needs of schools and students, TQP grantees have deployed innovative approaches to ensuring educators receive the training necessary to help students achieve academically. These approaches have been particularly important in tackling President Obama's goal of preparing an additional 100,000 STEM teachers. In North Carolina, for example, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a recipient of a 2014 TQP grant of \$7.7 million over a five-year period, is partnering with Guilford County and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools to prepare 300 teachers per year to incorporate technology (like digital games or 3-D printing) into instruction.

As part of its commitment to funding the expansion of effective practices, the Obama administration also has expanded support for proven national programs that successfully grow and accelerate the development of highly capable teachers

and school leaders. Through SEED, 22 grants comprising over \$280 million have supported organizations such as the National Writing Project, the New Teacher Center, and Teach For America to grow and deepen their efforts in high-needs schools across the country. To date, SEED has directly supported 22,000 teachers in all 50 states and D.C.

Additional highlights supported by this administration's investments include:

- **Diversity and Retention in the Workforce:** The Boston Plan for Excellence/Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) received a \$15 million 2010 TQP grant. To date, BTR has prepared 500 new teachers, more than half of whom are people of color, making them more racially and ethnically diverse than other new teachers in their partner district, Boston Public Schools. Of the 500 new teachers, 135 were prepared in math or science and 49 in early childhood education. The retention rate of BTR graduates after six years exceeded that of other new hires in the district during the same period by nearly 30 percentage points.
- **Transformative District and Higher Education Partnerships:** Arizona State University (ASU) received \$24.7 million through a 2009 TQP grant to reform 40 teacher preparation programs at ASU and 11 partner community colleges, while working with nine urban and rural school districts throughout the state. The partner school districts represent 230 schools, more than 10,000 teachers and 174,000 high-needs students. Through this partnership, 2,800 teachers were trained in a residency-based teacher preparation program. Additionally, to support comprehensive school reform, college faculty delivered professional development trainings and worked with district partners to develop curricular and instructional resources that were made accessible to all teachers in the partner school districts through a digital platform developed through the grant.
- **Focus on STEM Education:** California State University (CSU)—Dominguez Hills, a recipient of SLP, TQP, and TTT grants has leveraged federal and private funding to develop multiple STEM teacher preparation pathways. In addition to funding from the Department of Education, which supports a leadership program for charter schools, as well as a residency and alternative certification program, CSU—Dominguez Hills has developed programs in partnership with the National Science Foundation, Noyce Foundation, and Annenberg Foundation. Through these programs, they support undergraduate and graduate-level students to become STEM teachers in their partner Los Angeles Unified and Inglewood school districts. CSU—Dominguez Hills has credentialed more math and science teachers in California than any other institution over the last 10 years.

Supporting and Retaining Excellent Educators

Just as we expect our students to learn and grow, we know that providing structured opportunities for our educators to develop their practice is critical to their professional growth and satisfaction.

Through the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), states, districts, and their nonprofit partners have been able to develop and implement a variety of performance-based compensation systems that reward teachers and principals for increases in student achievement, provide career ladder opportunities, and boost the number of effective instructors teaching in hard-to-staff subjects and in high-needs schools. TIF grantees implement professional development and career advancement strategies that enable teachers and school leaders to take on leadership and mentoring roles, and provide rewards to teachers and principals for their leadership roles, as well as for their effectiveness in the classroom. To date, the Department of Education has awarded 131 TIF grants totaling \$1.8 billion to create human capital systems that include multiple measures of success, engage teachers, and are sustainable.

Some promising examples of TIF grantees include:

- **Denver Public Schools (DPS):** In 2010, DPS received a five-year \$28 million TIF grant. DPS comprises more than 84,000 students across 170 schools. Using TIF funds, Denver refined its human capital systems to enhance educators' ongoing professional development and advance teacher leadership in 83 schools. Effective teachers in these pilot schools were eligible to apply for a team lead role—an innovative teacher leadership position that allowed teachers to coach and evaluate their peers. Team leads received an additional \$3,000 to \$5,000 in compensation over the course of the year. Finally, DPS paid an additional \$5,000 to effective teachers willing to serve in hard-to-staff positions. Although more than half of DPS students struggle to reach proficiency, and only 56 percent graduate from high school, the district has outpaced the state average on student growth over the past five years.
- **District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS):** In 2012, DCPS received a five-year \$62 million TIF grant. Funds from the TIF grant support ongoing leadership development training for teacher leaders and principals; the creation of additional leadership roles for teachers aimed at school turnaround; and expansion of performance-based compensation, including the creation of a new salary structure based on effectiveness for principals and assistant principals. Teachers rated highly effective on their evaluation system are eligible for bonuses of up to \$25,000. Outside evaluation of their efforts has shown that DCPS has been successful in retaining highly effective teachers and school leaders.

Teacher Evaluation and Support—Facilitating Continuous Improvement

In addition to transforming the way teachers are prepared and supported, the Obama administration has been committed to improving student achievement in high-needs schools by strengthening the performance of teachers and principals through better data, feedback, and professional development. In developing systems to support and evaluate educators, it can be easy to agree upon goals; however, building those systems has been a challenge in many places. The Department of Education's policies related to teacher evaluation and support systems have been guided by a core set of principles. Evaluations should be:

- **Used to Continually Improve Instruction:** The primary goal of educator evaluation systems is to support instructional improvement to maximize student growth. Evaluation should not exist as a stand-alone component of an educator's career; evaluation systems must help teachers improve and lead to increased student learning. These systems must generate information that educators can use to improve their practice and that can help to identify the excellent educators who can then share their practices with their colleagues and peers. Evaluation and support systems should generate frequent, timely, and actionable feedback for educators. The systems should not be used as a mechanism to put teachers into binary categories with the intent that one test score or evaluation cycle alone leads to a teacher being dismissed. No teacher should be dismissed based on a single test score. Instead, evidence of student learning should be one of several components that, together, help identify teacher strengths and needs to meet the shared goal of improved teaching and student learning growth.
- **Developed with Meaningful Educator Involvement:** Educators must see the direct connection of evaluation and support systems to helping students every day in the classroom. To ensure this connection, evaluation and support systems must be developed and implemented with educator involvement. State and district staff must engage educators at the earliest stages of system development and continue that engagement in meaningful ways throughout system implementation and refinement. Principals must similarly engage teachers at the school level. Educator expertise in the innovation and improvement of these systems is critical to these systems' success. For example, districts may encourage teachers to design metrics for inclusion in the overall evaluation and support systems or recruit "master teachers" to perform classroom observations and mentor other teachers.
- **Valid, Reliable, and Fair:** To be effective, educator evaluation systems must be technically and educationally

sound and implemented by educators and administrators who are well-trained in effective practice. We know that many states convene technical advisory committees that include experts in assessment of student learning growth and educator evaluation measures. These experts help identify the most valid and reliable measures to include in evaluation systems to ensure consistency and fairness. Such committees can help states determine the most appropriate measures to include in their systems as well as map out the types of training and resources that districts will need for successful implementation. In addition, states and districts must implement the evaluation measures as intended.

- **Include Multiple Measures:** To best reflect the many contributions that educators make to students, schools, and communities, educator evaluation and support systems should include a range of types of measurement. No one measure of an educator's contribution tells the complete story and no evaluation system should be based on just one indicator. Observations are at the heart of most systems, as a key mechanism to provide rich insight and feedback into specific instructional practices that are working or need improvement. Research shows that short, frequent, formative observations by multiple observers leads to a more complete and accurate picture of an educator's practice. Measures of student learning growth also must be included. When states administer statewide assessments, how a student grows from one test to the next should be considered. Additional ways to measure students' learning growth could include analysis of individual students' growth goals based on local tests, rubrics, or student work portfolios. Beyond student learning growth, well-designed, 360-degree feedback—including student surveys—also can be valuable.
- **Transparent:** The inputs and outcomes of educator evaluation systems should be clear and comprehensible. All teachers and school leaders must have a clear understanding of the metrics on which they are being evaluated, as well as confidence that evaluation scores will be used to support professional development that will ultimately help educators better serve their students. Including educators in the development and implementation of evaluation plans can help build that understanding and confidence. Educators should have access to their individual performance measures, not just their summative ratings. Resources should be readily available for educators to access to improve in areas that they and their evaluators jointly identify as areas of need. Clear processes and procedures also should be in place for educators to dispute results they think are unfair. And individual teachers should never be called out publicly based on their evaluation results.

- **Used to Help Ensure Educational Equity:** All students need and deserve excellent teachers. The Obama administration and the Department of Education share with states and districts the goal of ensuring, in particular, that the most vulnerable students in the highest-needs schools have access to excellent teachers and leaders. To ensure this, systems must be put in place to identify excellent teachers and leaders, to ensure that access to these teachers and leaders is equally available, and to reward great teachers.

From thousands of conversations with educators and state leaders, the Obama administration has supported states and districts as they establish and implement educator evaluation and support systems, aligned with two important goals: improving learning, especially for students who are struggling, and improving the usefulness of evaluation and support systems to support continuous improvement and reward excellence.

The administration has supported this important work since 2009, recognizing that, at the time the President took office, it was common for teacher evaluation systems not to provide feedback or support to educators, or to differentiate between educators on the basis of their effectiveness. A study performed by Professor Tom Kane in 2009 illustrated that the majority of school districts across the country did not evaluate teachers in a manner that distinguishes effective teachers from ineffective teachers, nor did those systems take into account student learning outcomes.

Through Race to the Top and, later as a part of ESEA flexibility agreements, more than 40 states have committed to developing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that reflect the administration's goals of ensuring that these systems provide meaningful, actionable feedback to educators. These systems use multiple measures of performance, including student learning growth. The Obama administration will continue to support state and local efforts to successfully connect student learning to instructional practice in a way that is transparent, sensible, and, most importantly, leads to improvement in teaching and improved academic outcomes for students.

Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

To ensure equal educational opportunity, every school must have the resources it needs to provide meaningful opportunities for all students to succeed, regardless of a student's geography, family income, or race. These resources include: access to a safe and healthy place to learn, high-

quality instructional materials, rigorous expectations and coursework, and—most critically—excellent educators to guide learning. However, throughout the country, students from low-income families and students of color are more likely than their peers to attend a school where they are taught by inexperienced, out-of-field and unqualified teachers.

State Educator Equity Plans

In July 2014, the Department of Education announced a comprehensive Excellent Educators for All Initiative to help states and districts support great educators for all students, including the students who need them most. Under this initiative, which consists of three components, each state received an Educator Equity Profile and access to comprehensive support through the Equitable Access Support Network (EASN), and was required to submit an Educator Equity Plan. Each Educator Equity Profile was designed to ensure maximum transparency of data to empower communities and help states identify gaps in access to high-quality teaching for students from low-income families and students of color, as well as to shine a spotlight on places where high-needs schools are beating the odds and successfully recruiting and retaining effective educators.

The EASN represents a \$4.2 million investment in supporting states and districts in developing and implementing Educator Equity Plans, including by: developing model plans, sharing promising practices, and providing communities of practice for educators to discuss challenges and share lessons learned with each other. Finally, Educator Equity Plans require each state to fully engage with stakeholders, including teachers, principals, districts, parents, and community organizations, to analyze data and create a plan that includes locally developed solutions to ensure that every student has access to effective educators.

In spring 2015, the Department of Education received Educator Equity Plans from all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Each state received expert advice on its Educator Equity Plan prior to the Department's review; and in fall 2015, the Department approved Educator Equity Plans for all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. To be approved, each state's Educator Equity Plan was required to address the following elements: (1) consultation; (2) equity gap identification; (3) the likely causes of the identified equity gaps; (4) the steps to be implemented to eliminate the identified equity gaps; (5) the measures used to evaluate progress toward eliminating these gaps; and (6) a description of the public reporting on progress in closing the identified gaps.

States and districts are taking innovative approaches to eliminating identified equity gaps, including, for example, by investing in strategies related to: strengthening teacher

preparation programs, supporting school leaders, providing financial incentives designed to reward teachers for their exceptional work and to encourage excellent educators to remain in the highest-needs schools, and eliminating critical shortages in the teaching force so that staffing challenges do not negatively impact student learning. Additionally, all states are required to publicly report their progress in eliminating their identified equity gaps to help ensure that students, schools, communities, and stakeholders continue to have information about states' progress in this critical work.

The Department of Education is supporting this work by providing technical assistance through EASN. Working with the Office of State Support at the Department, EASN offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. EASN assists in the development and implementation of Educator Equity Plans and provides assistance to states as they implement strategies to ensure equitable access to excellent educators for all students. Additionally, beginning in March 2016 with Mississippi, the Department of Education's Teaching and Principal Ambassador Fellows are working with state agencies to host on-site Educator Equity Labs that will enhance the engagement of educators and other stakeholders in contributing to the implementation of the states' approved Educator Equity Plans.

Over the last seven-and-a-half years, the Obama administration has valued and created multiple programs and initiatives to support innovative preparation, support, and leadership efforts to increase the impact of our nation's educators. While there is continued work ahead, the results from the initiatives highlighted in this report have put us on a path to strengthen and empower educators and ensure they have the leading voices in educating our children.

The President's Testing Action Plan

President Obama recognizes that, in too many schools, unnecessary testing is consuming too much time—which students should be spending learning—and creating undue stress for educators and students. He has heard from parents who worry that too much testing is keeping their kids from learning some of life's most important lessons and from teachers who feel so much pressure to teach to a test that it takes the joy out of teaching and learning, both for them and for the students. That is why in October 2015, the President announced his Testing Action Plan to make sure that the tests we are giving our students meet certain basic principles. Tests should be:

- **Worth Taking:** Tests should be worth the time of the teachers giving them and the students taking them—they should provide timely, actionable feedback to students, parents, and teachers that can be used to guide instruction and to identify areas of additional support for students. Assessments should include questions that push students’ critical thinking skills, so that students gain valuable experience while taking them.
- **Time Limited:** Tests must not eat up valuable instructional time; and time students spend taking required statewide standardized assessments should be capped to ensure that no child spends more than 2 percent of her classroom time taking these tests. States and school districts carefully should consider whether each assessment serves a unique, essential role in ensuring that students are learning.
- **High Quality:** Tests should measure student knowledge and skills against clear standards that will prepare students for college and careers. Any tests should provide accurate measures of student achievement and growth, and allow students to demonstrate mastery of skills that will help them succeed.
- **Just One of Multiple Measures:** Assessments provide important information about student learning, but no one assessment should ever be the only factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school. Information from sources such as school assignments, portfolios, and projects should help measure a student’s academic performance.
- **Enacting a Smart and Balanced Approach to Testing:** ESSA includes provisions consistent with the administration’s principles around reducing the amount of classroom time spent on standardized testing, including support for state efforts to audit and streamline their current assessment systems and pilot new innovative assessments. ESSA authorizes resources for states and districts to conduct assessment audits in an effort to eliminate redundancy and to ensure that assessments are of high quality, maximize instructional goals, and are designed to help students achieve state standards. ESSA maintains statewide assessments to ensure that teachers and parents can mark the progress and performance of their children every year, from third to eighth grade and once in high school.
- **Informing States and Districts about Existing Resources:** President Obama instructed the Department of Education to give clear information to states and districts about how they could use existing federal dollars to audit and reduce their assessments and best practices for using testing to support high-quality instruction. Earlier this year, the Secretary of Education followed through and issued guidance that does just that, while shining a light on the good work already happening across the country. The guidance provides examples of how states and districts can use their federal funding to explore new strategies for ensuring the use of high-quality, useful, and well-constructed assessments, and the elimination of redundant and burdensome assessments. The Department of Education also has offered “Office Hours” for states and districts to consult on how to reduce testing.
- **Providing States Additional Resources to Improve Tests:** The administration has provided states with funding to improve and innovate through the Enhanced Assessments Grant program. This year, the Department of Education will provide \$8.9 million in funding competitively to states to help them develop innovative tests and to audit their existing assessments to reduce the burden of testing on teachers and students.

Under the Obama administration we’ve seen tremendous progress in states establishing higher standards to prepare all students for college and careers. These high standards are necessary; and an important part of educating students successfully is assessing their progress in learning to high standards. But President Obama understands that we must ensure tests are fair, are of high quality, take up the minimum necessary time, and reflect the expectation that students will be prepared for success in college and careers. That is why he has asked the Department of Education to work with states and school districts to make sure that any tests we use in our classrooms meet these principles.

Action to Improve Assessments and Reduce the Burden of Testing

Since President Obama announced the Testing Action Plan, the administration has taken important steps to help states and districts eliminate unnecessary testing, while ensuring that assessments given to students are high quality and time limited. They include:

The Obama administration will continue to prioritize making sure that all assessments meet the principles of the President’s Testing Action Plan—ensuring they are time limited, high quality, worth taking, and employ multiple measures of student success.

CASE STUDY: Delaware Committed to Finding a Balance

In a visit to Wilmington, Del., in January 2016, Secretary of Education John B. King, Jr. spoke with state leaders, superintendents, and educators about testing, the role it plays in teaching and learning, and how quality assessments can be used to improve academic achievement. "It's important for us to know where we have achievement gaps. It is important for us to know where our students are making progress," Secretary King said. "But there are places around the country where there is too much assessment and the assessments are not the quality we want."

During his visit, Secretary King praised Delaware for recognizing the critical importance of high-quality assessments in providing information to educators, parents, and students, and for understanding their value in ensuring equity for all students. He also noted that, too often, there are unnecessary or overly burdensome assessments that don't provide the information that educators need to support students. In Delaware, districts are working together to reduce the testing burden and improve the quality of necessary tests that provide information on students' learning growth.

Delaware is taking important steps to reduce the burden of unnecessary testing and to improve the quality of assessments in the state, including:

- Requiring all schools in the state to complete an inventory of their assessments and submit their findings for a formal review by a state-designated committee of teachers, administrators, and parents to evaluate the assessment inventories, recommendations, and impact information; and
- Dedicating over \$325,000 to help schools conduct the assessment inventories, across the 11 districts that requested financial assistance. Individual grants ranged from \$10,000 to \$60,000 based on student populations.

"Our educators, our students, and their parents all deserve the benefits of effective assessments that show when students are excelling and when they need extra support," said Governor Jack Markell. "At the same time, tests that don't add meaningfully to the learning process mean less time for students to receive the instruction and support they need. We are committed to finding the right balance, and this initiative is an important part of that process."

Recruiting 100,000 New STEM Educators: 100Kin10

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, more of our students will need to be prepared with strong math, science, technology and engineering skills to succeed. But, school districts across the country lack high-quality STEM teachers to meet this need. The need is real. Last year, there were over 600,000 technology jobs open across the United States. But, there are large disparities in student access and engagement in STEM courses, with only half of high schools nationwide offering calculus and only 63 percent offering physics. One quarter of the high schools with the highest percentages of African-American and Latino students do not offer Algebra II and a third of these schools do not offer chemistry. To address these challenges, the President issued a call to action in his 2011 State of the Union address to put 100,000 new STEM teachers in the classroom in 10 years to equip a new generation of problem-solvers with the STEM skills they need to revitalize our economy, lead our nation, and solve the globe's most pressing challenges.

In response to that call to action, 100Kin10, a network of 280 organizations, including school districts, universities, foundations, corporations, museums, nonprofits, and government agencies, was formed to mobilize, coordinate, and accelerate commitments to achieve the ambitious 100,000 excellent STEM teacher goal by 2021 and to solve the underlying challenges that have made this goal so challenging.

Today, at the critical halfway point in the 10-year effort, 100Kin10 is announcing that its network already has trained more than 30,000 teachers, and that its partners have made commitments to recruit and train at least an additional 70,000 by 2021—meaning they will meet the President's goal and yield more than 100,000 excellent STEM teachers by the 10-year mark. These estimates have been independently verified by the American Institutes for Research.

These investments demonstrate President Obama's continued commitment to ensuring that all our children are taught by well-supported educators and have the chance to succeed.

“Over the next 10 years, with so many baby boomers retiring from our classrooms, we want to prepare 100,000 new teachers in the fields of science and technology and engineering and math.”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
2011 State of the Union Address

THE ROAD AHEAD



President Obama has been a champion of the cradle-to-career education pipeline, developing and supporting efforts to ensure that every student, at every stage, has access to the tools, teachers, and services they need to do well in school and to be prepared for what's next. The programs and initiatives fostered by the Obama administration began to bridge the persistent gap between K-12 and postsecondary education and will have a lasting impact on P-20 education in America. The State University of New York is proud to have partnered with President Obama throughout his time in office and we look forward to advancing his signature reforms for years to come.



— NANCY L. ZIMPER
Chancellor, State University of New York

For all of the positive work that has taken place throughout the past seven-and-a-half years, there is much left to be done. Any future administration must not only build on the progress that so many have worked so hard to achieve, it also must intensify existing efforts to make gains where we, as a nation, frankly, must see far greater improvement. Those areas include: expanding access to high-quality early learning; supporting the next wave of innovation in America's schools; continuing the focus on providing equitable opportunities for all students, particularly as states and districts implement ESSA; and preparing, developing, and retaining great teachers.

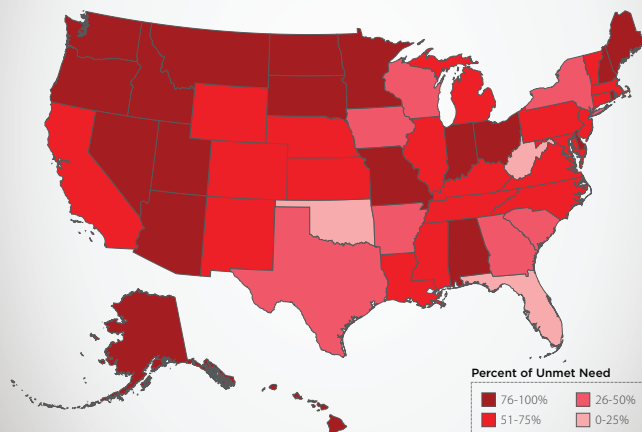
Expanding Access to High-Quality Early Learning

Each year, about 4 million children enter kindergarten in the United States. All parents hope their child will start school ready for success and many parents turn that hope into action, seeking out supportive and high-quality early learning opportunities. Unfortunately, not every parent finds those opportunities, and access differs based on geography, race, and income.

As a result, too many children enter kindergarten a year or more behind their classmates in academic and social-emotional skills. For some children, starting out school from behind can trap them in a cycle of continuous catch-up in their learning. As a nation, we must ensure that all children, regardless of income, race, disability, or spoken language have access to high-quality preschool opportunities.

Early Learning Unmet Need

More than 2.5 million 4 year-olds don't have access to publicly funded preschool programs

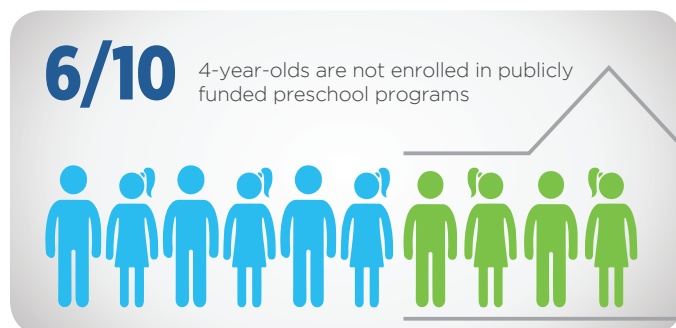


Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (2013). The State of Preschool 2013. State Preschool Yearbook.

Significant Shortages of Access across the Board

While both states and the federal government invest in early learning, these efforts have fallen short of what is needed to ensure that all children can access a high-quality early education that will prepare them for success.

According to data collected from NIEER, across the nation, 58 percent of 4-year olds—or six out of every 10 children—are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs through state preschool, Head Start, and special education preschool services. Even fewer are enrolled in the highest-quality programs.



Shortages Are More Pronounced Among Certain Populations

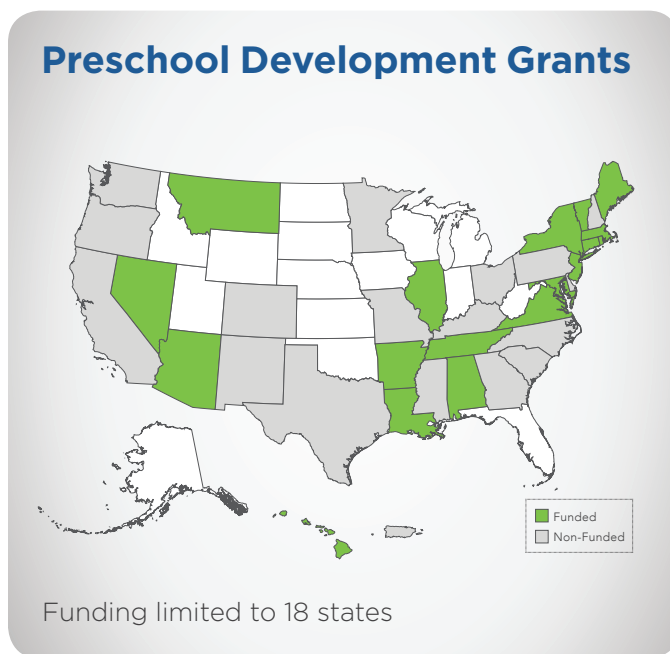
For Latino children, the unmet need is especially great. While Latinos are the fastest-growing and largest minority group in the United States, making up a quarter of 3- and 4-year-olds, Latinos demonstrate the lowest preschool participation rates of any major ethnicity or race. In the 2013-2014 school year, the participation rate for Latinos was 40 percent, compared to 50 percent for African-American children, and 53 percent for white children.

While most children who have access to preschool attend moderate-quality programs, black children and children from low-income families are the most likely to attend low-quality preschool programs and the least likely to attend high-quality preschool programs.

Racial and socioeconomic disparities in access to high-quality early education contribute to achievement gaps that are noticeable by the time children enter kindergarten. A longitudinal study of children in kindergarten in 2010-2011, found that, upon children's first entry into kindergarten, Asian students had higher reading and math scores than black, Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. Scores in reading and math were lowest for kindergartners in households with incomes below the federal poverty level and highest for those in households with incomes

at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Without access to quality preschool, African-American and Latino children, and children from low-income families, are far less likely to be prepared to start kindergarten than their peers.

Congress took an important step in 2014 to address inequities in access to high-quality preschool by supporting the Preschool Development Grants program. In addition, in the last Congress, more than 150 members of the House and Senate supported the *Strong Start for America's Children Act*, legislation that mirrors the President's proposals around providing all 4-year olds with access to high-quality preschool. But that legislative proposal has not received the support it needs for passage. And for Preschool Development Grants, the demand far outpaced the supply of funding. Thirty-five states and Puerto Rico applied. However, due, in part, to funding limitations, only 18 grants were awarded.



Moving Forward

Without increased investment in early learning, our nation runs the risk of limiting opportunity for a generation of children by allowing educational gaps to take root before kindergarten. Collectively, we must commit to ensuring that all children—particularly our most vulnerable—are prepared for a future in which they can fulfill their greatest potential through a strong education. Our new education law, ESSA, provides new opportunities to expand early learning and reaffirms the allowable use of Title I funds to support preschool-age children. The new PDG program, authorized through ESSA, will build on the work begun through the original PDG program, jointly

administered by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. However, this program only will reach a small percentage of the children who need it, and significant new investments in high-quality early education are necessary to help states, local communities, and parents close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. The President has called for high-quality preschool for all 4-year olds and high-quality child care for children under 4 years old. Across the country, we must expand access to high-quality early learning to ensure that each child progresses through the education pipeline and graduates from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, and life.

Supporting the Next Wave of Innovation in America's Schools

President Obama's strategy to win the future depends on the intersection of education, innovation, and infrastructure. The growth industries of today and tomorrow require a workforce with unprecedented knowledge and skills, as well as the ability to evolve and adapt to new challenges quickly. Yet we have not yet launched an education infrastructure that reliably and consistently supports the kind of innovation we need to achieve this future. Despite the administration's investments in educators' innovative ideas, there still are tremendous numbers of educators across the country who are eager to address education challenges through innovation. They need additional support to do so.

In places where the administration has partnered with schools and local nonprofits to innovate, the results have been striking: these investments have helped students gain months in additional learning, reshaped and streamlined processes within school systems, and identified better strategies for recruiting and supporting teachers and school leaders. Looking ahead, educators, policymakers, and philanthropic leaders can accelerate this progress by dedicating new resources to incubating innovative ideas and replicating those that

demonstrate impact and broader applicability. By aggressively pursuing new and better ways to educate students, we can build systems that help every child excel. To achieve this, the United States must out-innovate other nations and retake the lead as a global champion for educational excellence.

Building a Marketplace for Evidence

For all students to thrive in the classroom, in college, and in their careers, our education system must develop and implement the very best practices, policies, and ideas on an ongoing basis. That means building a new education ecosystem that encourages innovation—approaches that are notably better than current practice, particularly for our highest-needs students, and that can be scaled to other schools and locales. While innovative practices are constantly emerging to help more students graduate ready for college and a career, the education sector does not yet have an infrastructure for rigorously evaluating their impact or sharing and growing the use of effective practices. Since few innovations are tested, analyzed, and refined to enable others to adopt the innovation, they often are confined to an individual school, or even a single classroom.

Effectively fostering innovation requires an exponential increase in investments and strategies that have the potential to change the trajectory of students' academic careers. It requires an accelerated investment in innovation, not only in basic research and development, but in developing, validating, and scaling up solutions that have already been developed. In the field of medical technology, for example, most innovations come from the field rather than the lab. Similarly in education—another field characterized by continuous practitioner adaptation—significant innovations are developed by educators and educational entrepreneurs. Yet these innovations, even if effective, can have tremendous difficulty scaling due to a poorly functioning infrastructure that limits funding to develop, validate, and scale promising innovations.

The Obama administration has seeded this work through i3, which has awarded over \$1.3 billion to school districts and their nonprofit partners to promote the development and expansion of promising practices and strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness and the potential for sustainability and significant scale. This work will continue through i3's successor program, EIR. Despite i3's successes in improving student achievement and educator effectiveness, the program was not designed to fundamentally change how the education sector generates and funds research and development.

“ *If we want to win the future—if we want innovation to produce jobs in America and not overseas—then we also have to win the race to educate our kids.* ”

— PRESIDENT OBAMA
2011 State of the Union Address

Looking ahead, we must deepen our current investments in applied research so that innovators in the field can continue to try, fail, refine, and put forward practices that will make a meaningful difference in improving student achievement.

Building Robust Research and Development for Educational Breakthroughs

If a scientist went to sleep in 1950 and woke up today, she would be dazzled by the new tools in her field. A doctor would be shocked by the novel devices in medicine. Yet, as former New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein has described, teachers still operate in a classroom full of children, often with only chalk and a chalkboard—just as they did 60 years ago.

Because of limited investment in research and development, the benefits of the information technology (IT) revolution largely have passed education by. Social media companies have shown us new ways of connecting, advances in biotechnology have enabled the National Institutes of Health to fund the sequencing of 1,800 complete genomes, and e-commerce platforms have changed business models and created thousands of new businesses along the way. But there is simply not enough spending on research and development to produce similar breakthroughs in education.

Research and development accounts for only 0.2 percent of total national K-12 expenditures. Knowledge-intensive sectors of the economy invest 10 to 20 percent of sales in research and development, and even mature industries devote 2 percent of sales to these efforts. Too little support for innovation has deprived teachers of the tools and strategies they need to provide all students with necessary skills. Innovations in other fields, however, promise to make a surge of innovation in education easier, as education entrepreneurs leverage the IT revolution already underway in other sectors.

The administration repeatedly has called for a dedicated program to invest in breakthrough technologies to enhance student learning. Our government has done this exceedingly well in the context of military operations through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). President Obama has called for the creation of a similar entity, the Advanced Research Projects Agency—Education (ARPA-ED), solely focused on the pursuit of a small number of high-impact projects in education technology, from concept through demonstration or prototyping.

The possibilities for research are plentiful. Can customized digital tutors be created that adapt to the student over the course of his or her education, from preschool through

college? Can these same educational technologies be developed in ways that encourage and enhance lifelong learning? Can we find new approaches to assessment that measure mastery in real time rather than at the end of a course? If solutions such as these are possible, they will be achieved only by bringing together the most innovative teams of researchers, professional developers, and educators to tackle the problems as a whole.

A Continued Focus on Equity

Despite the advances we have made, much work remains to ensure that every child in America has the opportunity that he or she needs and deserves. While many low-performing schools—including those eligible for federal Title I funds under ESEA to support students in poverty—are improving, and disadvantaged students in all schools are making progress, achievement data underscore how important it is that we continue to focus attention and resources on further helping these schools and students.

Crisis in the Lowest-Performing Schools

Even with the progress we've made, comparing the percentage of students nationwide performing at grade level on state assessments in the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools to all other public schools reveals vast gaps. For example, in our lowest-performing 5 percent of elementary and middle schools, only 36 percent of students have reached grade-level proficiency in reading, compared to 67 percent in all other schools, a gap of 31 percentage points. The average gap in math proficiency is 36 percentage points. In other words, across the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools, about two-thirds of students do not meet grade-level standards. But in all other schools, the reverse is true: two-thirds of students reach proficiency. Approximately 3,000 low-performing elementary and middle schools serving more than a million students across the nation are in crisis.

Students who attend low-performing high schools—Title I-eligible schools that are among the lowest-performing 5 percent of high schools or have graduation rates of less than 60 percent—graduate their students on time at an unacceptably low rate: 40 percent. Students in all other high schools graduate on time at a rate of 87 percent, an average rate nearly 50 percentage points higher than what we see in our lowest-performing high schools. And, in over a dozen states, the graduation rate gap is even larger between the most challenged schools and all other high schools.

Course Equity Gaps

While the crisis in low-performing schools contributes to significant achievement gaps in all states, we also know that disadvantaged students can fall behind within higher-performing schools. This includes low-income, black, and Hispanic students, as well as English learners and students with disabilities. Often, disadvantaged students in these schools are denied access to rigorous coursework, or are not held to the same high standards as other students.

For example, while 37 percent of high school students are black or Hispanic, they represent only 27 percent of students enrolled in at least one AP course, and a mere 18 percent of students receiving a qualifying score of three or above on an AP exam.

Additionally, we know through the Department of Education's CRDC data that only 50 percent of high schools in the U.S. offer calculus, only 63 percent offer physics, and between 10 to 25 percent of high schools offer zero or one of the typical sequence of core math and science courses such as Algebra I and II, geometry, biology, and chemistry. There is even less access for black, Latino, American Indian, and Alaska Native students. We know that a quarter of high schools with the highest percentage of black and Latino students do not offer Algebra II; a third of these schools do not offer chemistry. Fewer than half of American Indian and Alaska Native high school students have access to the full range of math and science courses in their high school.

That is why it is critical that we identify schools that are failing any group of students and expect tailored actions in those schools to improve student outcomes.

Funding Inequities

While money is never the only answer, it is critical that our highest-needs schools get the funding necessary for success. Unfortunately, across our country, this is too often not the case. Nationwide, our highest-poverty districts spend 15 percent less per student than our lowest-poverty districts, despite having greater educational need. Twenty-three states spend fewer state and local dollars per student in their highest-poverty districts than their lowest-poverty districts. The problem does not stop at inequities in funding across district lines; to make matters worse, far too many districts spread their funding inequitably among schools within the district, shortchanging high-poverty schools. Today, in districts receiving Title I funds, two-thirds of students attend school where fewer state and local dollars are spent per pupil in Title I schools (which generally are the higher poverty schools in a district) than in non-Title I schools.

Implementation of ESSA

As states and school districts implement the provisions of ESSA, we have an opportunity to build on the successes of the past seven-and-a-half years and to continue to address achievement gaps and provide support to the students and schools that need help most.

The law requires states to set achievement goals for all students, including subgroups of students, to ensure that, when they graduate, they are prepared for success in college and careers. If entire schools, or subgroups of students within schools, fall short of the goals set by the state, the law requires that communities take action to address underperformance. Unlike NCLB, identification for accountability purposes no longer relies solely on a school's performance on reading and math tests or graduation rates. Instead, ESSA allows states to include additional indicators of school quality and success in their accountability systems. In addition, states must identify schools for either targeted or comprehensive support. To promote transparency regarding resource inequities, the new law requires reporting about access to advanced coursework and per pupil expenditures by school on state and local report cards.

The implementation of these provisions of the law is absolutely critical. They must be applied with fidelity to the law and with the same focus states have brought over the past several years to close gaps and turn around low-performing schools through their ESEA flexibility agreements.

The 2016-2017 school year will serve as a transition year between ESEA flexibility agreements and the implementation of the provisions in ESSA. As states and districts begin to develop their plans for meeting the spirit of the new law, it is essential that educators, parents, school board members, superintendents, and state-level officials craft policies that ensure the academic success of all students, particularly those who are traditionally underserved.

Preparing, Developing, Supporting, and Retaining Great Teachers

Of all the work that occurs at every level of our education system, the interaction between teacher and student is the primary within-school determinant of student success. A great teacher can help to make the difference between a student who achieves at high levels and a student who slips through the cracks, and a great principal can help teachers succeed as part of a strong, well-supported instructional team. Research shows that top-performing teachers can make a dramatic difference in the achievement of their students, and suggests

that the impact of being assigned to top-performing teachers year after year is enough to significantly narrow achievement gaps. We have to do more to ensure that every student has an effective teacher, every school has effective leaders, and every teacher and leader has access to the preparation, ongoing support, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration he or she needs to succeed.

Better Recruiting, Training, Supporting, and Rewarding Educators

While NCLB required that students of color and students from low-income families not be taught at disproportionate rates by inexperienced, unqualified, and out-of-field teachers, students of color from low-income backgrounds are more likely to be taught by less experienced and less-effective teachers. In addition, research suggests not only that teachers who leave schools attended by such students tend to be replaced by less-effective teachers, but also that turnover itself, which is particularly strong in low-performing schools, has a disruptive effect on student performance.

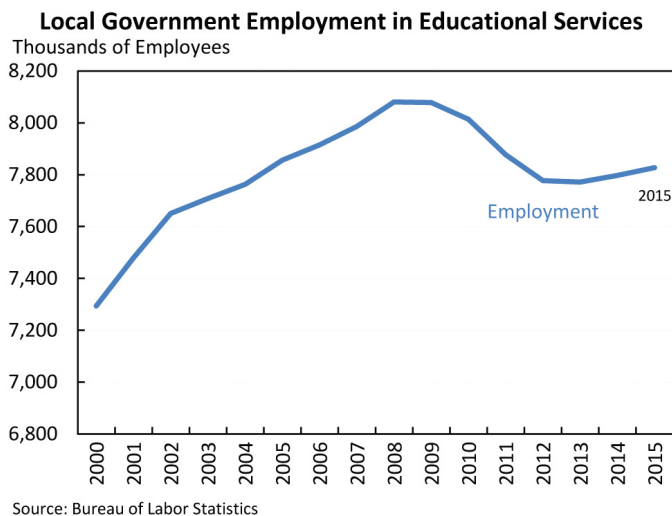
Turnover and transfer are unacceptably common in our highest-poverty schools and those with high concentrations of students from racial and ethnic minorities. Although there is promise of improvement, as some measures of turnover in high-poverty schools have declined slightly in recent years, stark disparities remain. Between the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years, 22 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools either moved to another school or left the profession, a rate that is roughly 70 percent higher than in low-poverty schools. In addition to higher turnover, one study found that four times as many math and science teachers transfer from

high-poverty schools to low-poverty schools than transfer from low-poverty schools to high-poverty schools. Nationally, about 15 percent of teachers change schools or leave the profession each year. Estimates suggest that these losses cost states and school districts up to \$2 billion annually.

Economic Obstacles in Supporting Educators

The hard work and dedication of America’s teachers have contributed significantly to the improvements we have seen in student achievement. Even more inspiring is that these successes have come despite the economic obstacles that teachers continue to face coming out of the recession. School revenues have stagnated since 2009, and growth in teachers’ salaries has slowed. In real terms, salaries for teachers are at their lowest point since 1987. Local government employment in educational services peaked in 2008, but fell during the recession and the years immediately following it. Employment has started to recover, but even in 2015, it remained well below its peak, with 250,000 fewer teachers and educational personnel employed.

As this report has noted, Congress enacted the Recovery Act and the Education Jobs Fund statute. The Recovery Act provided more than \$97 billion for existing and new education-related grant programs. It had several goals, including creating new jobs and saving existing ones, spurring economic activity, and investing in long-term growth. Between July 2009 and September 2010, the Recovery Act supported an average of 400,000 jobs, mostly directly in education for teachers, principals, librarians, and counselors. The Education Jobs Fund provided an additional \$10 billion to support 160,000 more education jobs for the 2010-2011 school year.



CONCLUSION

The President entered office with a strong vision for improving education in this country.

- Fix and reform NCLB;
- Ensure all students are given the same opportunity to achieve high standards that prepare them for college and careers and are held to the same high expectations through high-quality assessments;
- Turn around the persistently lowest-performing schools;
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and child care so that all of our students enter kindergarten prepared and ready for success;
- Better recruit, prepare, retain, and reward America's teachers and school leaders;
- Advance equity in education for all students through stronger and more diverse schools;
- Make STEM education a national priority;
- Address the dropout crisis by focusing on proven methods to improve student achievement and enhance graduation and higher education opportunities; and
- Grow innovation and investment in what works.

Due to the efforts of committed students, parents, educators, and state and local leaders, we have seen successes in each of these areas and additional ones.

In particular, it is impossible to overstate the influence of our educators on the dramatic improvements we have seen in education over the past seven-and-a-half years.

Teachers across the country are now shaping their curriculum to new college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments. Teachers and school leaders are participating in comprehensive teacher evaluation and support systems that include student learning outcomes as a measure of educator effectiveness. Every state is devoting significant resources and support to turn around their lowest-performing schools, including high schools.

These changes all began to take place within the last seven-and-a-half years. Despite the difficulty associated with adapting to these significant shifts in education, educators have risen to meet the challenge and contributed to one of the most dramatic periods of school improvement.

Today, on National Teacher Appreciation Day, the President will host hundreds of educators and stakeholders at the White House to thank them for their ongoing commitment to improving the lives of children. He stands with educators as he has done since taking office.

