

SUPPORTING RURAL EDUCATION

More than half of all school districts and about one-third of all public schools are located in rural areas. These schools serve approximately 20 percent of the nation's students. Rural schools have unique needs and face unique challenges. They may have difficulty recruiting and retaining effective teachers and providing access to a rigorous, well-rounded education – particularly in remote areas.

The President's 2012 budget request and *Blueprint for Reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* consider the specific needs of rural schools and aim to support them in preparing students for success in college and careers.

- **\$175 million in dedicated formula funding.** The budget maintains funds for the Rural Education Achievement program (REAP) to ensure that rural districts receive extra formula funds to support their schools. It also maintains other critical formula programs supporting schools in rural areas and elsewhere, including Title I, Title II-A, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Indian Education, and Migrant Education.
- **\$3.3 billion for the Excellent Instructional Teams programs.** This significant investment will recruit, prepare, and retain effective educators, including in rural and other high-need schools. These efforts may focus on math, science, special education, and other subjects where rural schools have teacher shortages. We will also make it easier for teachers to teach multiple subjects by defining teacher quality not exclusively on paper credentials, but on effectiveness in the classroom. This will help rural schools keep effective teachers in the classrooms in which they are needed most.
- **\$835 million for the Effective Teaching and Learning for a Complete Education program.** Funds will promote improved instruction based on college- and career-ready standards in literacy; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and other subjects including through the use of technology to deliver content. Funds could support rural districts that use distance education to expand access for students to a well-rounded education.
- **\$1.8 billion for school and community collaboration.** Our proposal supports schools and communities working together on their shared responsibility to support student success. Under the Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students program, the Promise Neighborhoods program, and the strengthened 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, districts and community-based organizations will have the flexibility to design a variety of projects based on their specific local needs. This flexibility will enable rural communities to implement programs that increase or expand learning time and community supports that address the unique challenges rural schools face.
- **\$900 million for Race to the Top.** The budget requests funds that will expand the Race to the Top competition to districts and carve out funds for rural applicants so they can work with stakeholders to plan and implement comprehensive reforms that meet their unique needs. We will conduct listening sessions over the next few months to develop the details and ensure that the competition is relevant to rural communities.

- **\$600 million for School Turnaround Grants.** Funds will support subgrants to districts totaling as much as \$6 million per school over three years to help low-performing schools overcome resource and other limitations and implement rigorous interventions that bring about dramatic improvements in student achievement and school performance. Rural schools received almost one-quarter of the almost 1,000 subgrants awarded by States under this program in fiscal year 2009.
- **Cuts red tape.** The budget request also consolidates a number of federal competitive funding streams so that rural districts will face fewer application hurdles and compliance requirements. The consolidated funding streams will offer rural schools flexibility in applying for federal funds to best meet their unique needs.
- **Levels the playing field in competitions.** To ensure that rural communities can be successful in these consolidated competitive programs, we will provide priorities for rural initiatives and provide technical assistance to potential grantees, including those from rural areas.
- **Provides greater flexibility.** Under the new accountability system, the reauthorized ESEA will offer greater local flexibility in designing interventions in schools that are not meeting their performance targets, so that rural communities will be able to decide what works best for their schools.